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Common Ground

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HEALTHY PLANET
HEALTHY DEMOCRACY**

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Human immunity
Rumi's *Birdsong*
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Deceit of Democracy
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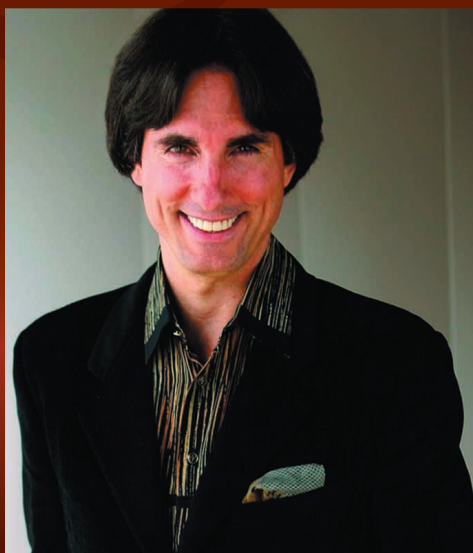
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This month's cover is an adaptation of *Prayer for the World*, an original work by Vancouver artist Lori-ann Latremouille. See Lori-ann's article on page 16 for details about her exhibition opening in Vancouver this month.

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Correction: In the March 2006
issue of *Common Ground*, we
erred in crediting Sylvia Bak for the
photo of Credo Mutwa on page six.
Lori Ann Lothian actually took the
photo. We apologize for the error.

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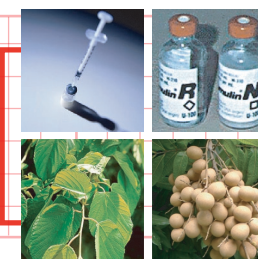




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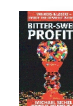


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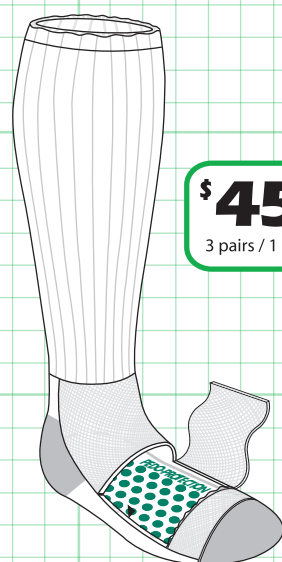


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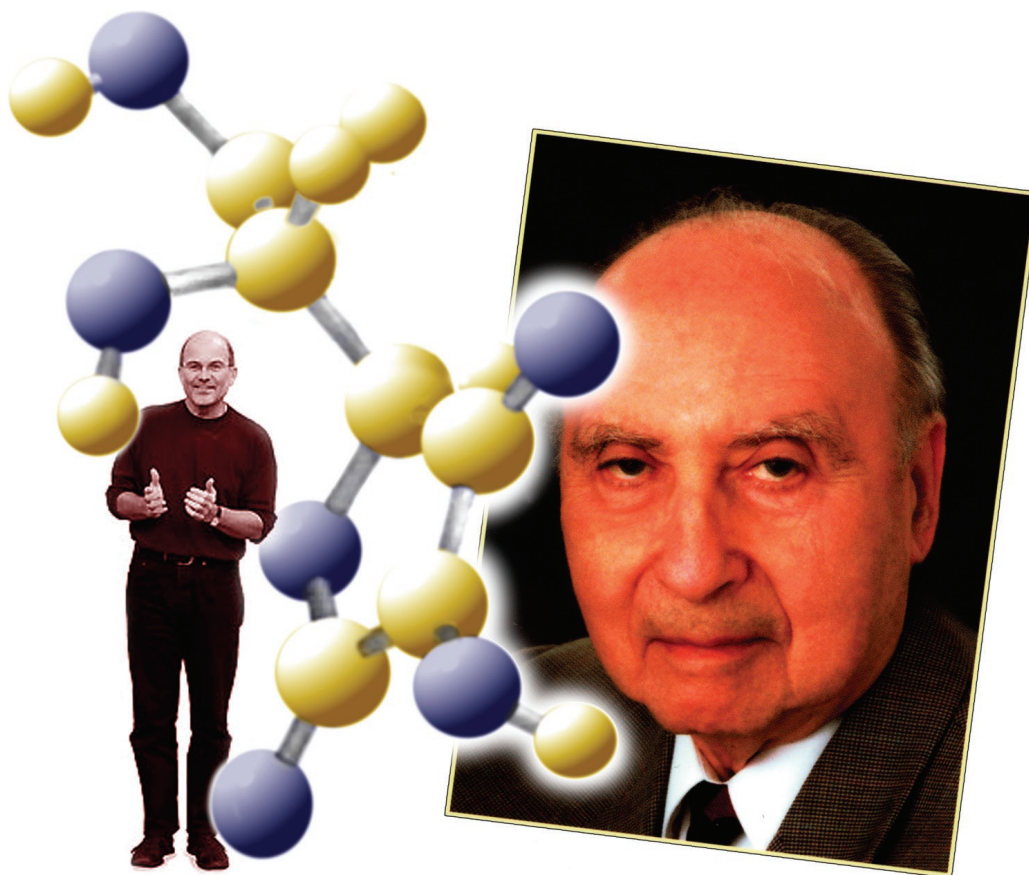
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Steven Carter, managing editor of the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine*, and orthomolecular pioneer Dr. Abram Hoffer.

Orthomolecular medicine: Vitamins are key to mental health

Article and illustration by Geoff Olson

“Hot peppers torch cancer cells,” notes a recent newspaper headline. According to researchers, the active ingredient that gives peppers their sting, capsaicin, also nukes prostate cancer cells.

It seems you can't get through the 24-hour news cycle without hearing again about the life-affirming properties of beta carotene, omega 3 fatty acids, or any of the alchemical wonders found in your refrigerator. Yet these scientific discoveries are hardly earthshaking. Human beings have coevolved with the plants, which they consume, for tens of thousands of years. We are biologically engineered to desire the natural substances that keep us healthy. The planet itself has supplied the fieldwork for our dietary experiments, and the research fellows have included countless generations of farmers, fieldhands, cooks and seed breeders.

Within seven years, every atom of our body has been replaced. Like any other living creature, a human being isn't a fixed entity, but rather an electrochemical whirlpool, through which the world flows. We truly are what we eat, drink and breathe.

“Orthomolecular medicine” formalizes this ageless insight into a biological paradigm. According to *Orthomolecular Medicine Online* (www.orthomed.org), this mouthful of a term “describes the practice of preventing and treating disease by providing the body with optimal amounts of substances, which are natural to the body.” The prefix *ortho* means to correct or straighten, in this

case using the right molecule in the right amount in individual cases.

Chemist Linus Pauling first used the term “orthomolecular” in a paper he wrote in the journal *Science* in 1968, to describe what Canadian physician Abram Hoffer had pioneered in his practice for years. According to the website, “The key idea... is that genetic factors affect not only the physical characteristics of individuals, but also their biochemical milieu. Biochemical pathways of the body have significant genetic variability and diseases such as atherosclerosis, cancer, schizophrenia or depression are associated with specific biochemical abnormalities, which are causal or contributing factors of the illness.”

From April 27 to 30, Vancouver hosts the 35th International Nutritional Medicine Conference. Internationally-known physicians and researchers will gather from around the world for three days to discuss current orthomolecular approaches to optimize immunological, neurological, cardiovascular and endocrine function.

The primary vehicle for research in this field is the *Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine*. As the journal's managing editor, Steven Carter organizes the annual, international Nutritional Medicine Today conference. Along with other colleagues, Carter founded the International Society for Orthomolecular Medicine (ISOM) to serve as an umbrella group to unify the various organizations. I meet with Carter at — where else—the Naam, to discuss the current state of the field.

Orthomolecular medicine offers a complementary, and sometimes alternative, approach to the standard pharmaceutical approach to mental disorders. According to Carter, in the case of schizophrenia, nutrients “... do the job a lot better, as long as there hasn't been years of drug therapy.” With early intervention, orthomolecular practitioners claim a recovery rate of 75 to 80 percent in cases of schizophrenia. It is a dramatic claim, which the orthomolecular community backs its gold standard for recovery. Carter tells me they define it as “living independently, getting along with family and community, being employable and paying taxes.”

The word “recovery” is never mentioned in mainstream psychiatry, Carter observes, cradling a cup of green tea. “It's very unusual for a person to be able to function enough to work and hold a job if they are on drugs alone. The drugs succeed in altering behaviour and masking symptoms, but they don't correct biochemistry; they don't correct whatever imbalances are there. They flatten the affect.”

In 2003, the International Schizophrenia Foundation's newsletter *Nutrition & Mental Health* noted that mainstream antidepressants perform only at slightly higher levels than placebos. With some of these drugs showing only minimal benefit, and even outright health risks after being released to the public, how did they ever clear the scientific peer review process?

“It's hard to figure a ready-made reason other than economic,” says Carter, shaking his head. “Orthomolecular came to the forefront of treatment in the late '50s and early '60s. It was slated to be the main treatment for mental disorders, and it had natural ramifications for all other illnesses that involve chemical imbalances.” But at the same time that neuroleptic drugs were developed, the first generation of Haldol and other drugs for mental illness entered the market. Those drugs were much more dramatic in their effect and obviously more lucrative.

Today, doctors can take a quick look at a patient's symptoms and look up the diagnosis in the DSM IV, the diagnostic bible in the psychiatric community. “You say, ‘here are the various treatments and these are the dosages,’ and plug it in. It takes 10 minutes. But to actually assess a person's biochemical individuality takes time,” Carter explains.

The orthomolecular approach doesn't rule out the use of drugs in treatment of mental illness, especially in cases of full-blown psychosis. But it does seek to limit and reduce their use over time, if the patient's condition improves through management of diet and treatment with nutrients. “There isn't a shunt at the neck that dissociates the brain from the body,” Carter says with a smile. “The brain functions better in a healthy body. The whole idea of eat your vegetables, the Adelle Davis you are what you eat thing has been around for a generation. But it hasn't quite translated into mental health. You wouldn't believe how many psychiatrists ask, ‘What's diet got to do with it?’”

“We're talking about the brain here,” Carter says with emphasis. “Well, where do you think the brain is? It's really remarkable, these are people who've been to university for 10 to 12 years.” He laughingly notes that these intuitively obvious notions should be “no-brainers” to the medical community. With doctors receiving no more than eight hours of instruction on nutrition, the institutionalized ignorance, while understandable, is hardly justifiable.



It's a commonplace observation that general practitioners rarely ask patients about their dietary habits until it's too late, as in the cases of Type 2 diabetes. (Ironically, Dr. Abram Hoffer in Victoria, BC, has been practising orthomolecular medicine for 50 years, yet his approach still lies outside full mainstream clinical and scientific acceptance. He is the true giant in the field, Carter and others tell me.)

This leads to the question of a whole spectrum of behavioural abnormalities. Are some of them fed – literally – by today's poor dietary practices? Several years ago, a high school in Appleton, Wisconsin, replaced its cafeteria's processed foods with wholesome, nutritious food. Prior to implementing the change, the school experienced massive disruption from students. The acting-up included expulsions, dropouts and violations involving weapons and drugs. There was a security officer on duty full-time.

After the meals were changed, staff saw immediate improvements in the students. They were more stable and able to concentrate in class, with a considerable decrease in impulsive behaviours, such as talking out, fidgeting and foul language. The health complaints also diminished substantially. The new diet and improved behaviour

have continued for seven years, and across the US, schools are changing their meal programs with claims of similar results.

Most of us wouldn't argue with such findings linking behaviour to foods. Any parent knows how their child can be transformed simply by giving them sugar. But is there solid, scientifically verifiable evidence for the more dramatic claims of orthomolecular medicine? Carter responds with a September 2005 report from the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Researchers Mark Levine and his colleagues found that vitamin C may be an effective cancer fighter when taken intravenously in high doses. "It didn't hit the front page of *The New York Times*, but if it was a negative study, it sure would have. It wasn't even reported."

In orthomolecular medicine, the official recommended daily allowance (RDA) for natural substances is considered next to meaningless. If you are under stress, and living in an urban environment eating denatured

foods, you will likely require more than the officially stated RDA for a spectrum of vitamins and other natural substances.

"The whole paradigm saw vitamins in terms of deficiency," Carter says. "Just give enough so you're not deficient, so you don't

get scurvy or pellagra. That was the old paradigm. The new paradigm is vitamin as treatment. So you use considerably different amounts, sometimes way beyond an amount used to prevent

deficiency disease. Sometimes, with intravenous vitamin C in cancer, it's as much as 100 grams."

Carter insists that the best approach for avoiding biochemical-related ailments is a healthy diet and lifestyle. Supplements are not replacements, he insists. People can, and do, go overboard with their enthusiasm for alternative medicine, with their opposition to mainstream medicine translating to an over-dependence on supplements, rather than healthy foods.

Yet mainstream resistance to

orthomolecular medicine is real. *Medline*, the respected, Internet medical database, carries electronic versions of medical journals, but has rejected *The Journal of Orthomolecular Medicine* several times, according to Carter. Why should a journal written by qualified health professionals be rejected, when *Medline* offers health-related material from *Newsweek*, *Time* and even *Playboy*?

Perhaps a clue is offered in the fact that the DSM IV, the psychiatric diagnostic manual mentioned earlier, has quadrupled in size over the past few decades. In a medical market dominated by the pharmaceutical industry – a global Goliath second only to the international arms industry in profits – every quirk of human nature can be spun and sold as pathology. "Sitting there slouching like that, they have a pill for it," Carter says to me with a laugh.

As I call for the bill, I make a mental note to sit up straight during interviews, and to drink more green tea.

35th Annual International Orthomolecular Medicine Conference Apr 27–30. Margot Kidder presents a special public evening, Fri, Apr 28, 7:30pm. Fairmont Hotel Vancouver. Register for conference at www.orthomed.org or call 416-733-2117.

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Interview by Joseph Roberts

Joseph Roberts: Plant medicine has a major competitor out there called synthetic pharmaceuticals.

Chris Kilham: Well, at least in terms of the history of the world, synthetic pharmaceuticals are a very brief flirtation. They got rolling in the early 1900s and picked up after World War II, but, fundamentally, synthetic pharmaceutical medicine is largely unproven, experimental and very dangerous. Three hundred thousand Americans die every year from the "proper" use of over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Those are bad odds, and those numbers come from compiled reports in medical journals. It's very sobering.

Herbs are just plain safer. They're far less expensive. They've been used as medicines by humans and protohumans for 60,000 years that we

know of. They have a demonstrated track record in medicine. They form the basis of modern pharmacy – many life-saving drugs come directly from plants. It's the largest sector of medicine on Earth.

The pharmaceutical industry has more money, but more people in the world are using plants for all the right reasons. So, I'm really advocating a sensible, proven, safe, effective approach to personal health care, rather than this new, strange, unproven, very lethal medicine that has cropped up extremely recently in history.

JR: Which also has an incredible marketing campaign behind it, like the current scare about the avian flu.

CK: There's real and legitimate concern about this H5-N1 virus, because human flu outbreaks across

Chris Kilham presents the keynote seminar at the Canadian Health Food Association show, where he will talk about his experiences in the Amazon, especially his work with acai, a purple fruit found in the rainforest. Admission is free, however donations to the Amazon International Rainforest Reserve are greatly appreciated. April 21, 7pm, Parkview Terrace, Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Chris has a threefold message. Firstly, he wants to educate people on the number one category of medicine on Earth: plant medicines. Secondly, all this has a strong environmental tie-in to the ways the plant medicine trade can help protect the natural environment. As indigenous Native people in traditional cultures have neither the access to markets, nor adequate resources, people like Chris Kilham provide invaluable assistance.

the board come from animals, and the majority of human flu outbreaks do come from birds, notably ducks. The migratory pathways of birds cover the planet and these birds intersect at different places, like northern Alaska.

If, in fact, it's enough of the world bird population, and if the particular flu virus they're carrying mutates – as flu always does – there's a real possibility of a lethal, horrific pandemic. That's not to say it will happen, but I think there's something to be concerned about. It could either be something we go, "Whew, that was close," or it could be something that takes out hundreds of millions of people worldwide.

Flu viruses are moving targets. They mutate, change, become different things. We're dealing with a tremendous number of very onerous unknowns with the flu virus.

But, we do have over one million people dying every year from malaria – a huge awful thing. The problem is that most of the people in malaria countries aren't really economically very well-off, so that's a poor bet for pharmaceutical development. So, even though the World Health Organization

has urgently called for humanitarian assistance from the pharmaceutical sector, it's like they don't really care. It's like, you know, who cares about AIDS in Africa, those are just black people, so it's not significant to most of the people in power.

That's an awful, awful thing, but the social economic power brokers in the world write off whole sectors of the human population.

JR: Did you see *The Constant Gardener*?

CK: That was a wonderful movie. Right now, you have a huge scandal in the whole drug-testing world. The drug companies have migrated en masse to India for all of their testing. If you give Indian people a couple of rupees and say it's a medical test, hey, they just plain go along with it. That's a terrible thing. So, that movie is prescient and unfortunately entirely too true.

JR: Given that vaccine immunizations are a roll of the dice, improving the quality of the immune system seems like a better bet.

CK: I think that's always warranted, and increasingly now, because people are immune-
continued on p. 45

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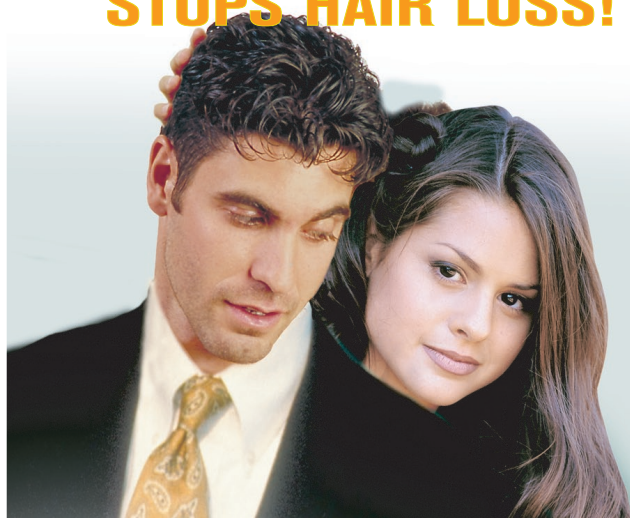
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Depressed or anxious? Switching pills for your ills a dangerous practice

by Alan Cassels

The story of benzodiazepines is of awesome proportions... a national scandal. The impact is so large that it is too big for governments, regulatory authorities and the pharmaceutical industry to address head-on, so the scandal has been swept under the carpet.

– Phil Woolas MP,
British House of Commons,
December 7, 1999.

In *Selling Sickness*, Ray Moynihan and I discussed how the pharmaceutical industry, ever vigilant to expand new markets for its products, has worked in tandem with the medical profession to widen the boundaries of illness. We described a world where “new” conditions are painted as “dire,” and where risk factors in our bones or blood are promoted to full-fledged diseases, in and of themselves, hence becoming prime targets for pharmaceutical intervention.

In painting this picture, however, we touched only briefly on a very important aspect of

selling sickness: the methodologies used to shift patients from older, cheaper, off-patented drugs to newer and more expensive patented products. The best example to demonstrate this phenomenon is the recharacterization of anxiety into depression and the wholesale switching of older, anti-anxiety drugs, largely benzodiazepines – drugs like Ativan, Valium and Xanax – to newer SSRIs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, such as Paxil, Zoloft or Prozac.

The switch to newer treatments is partially due to the “newer is better” thinking that permeates so much of our consumer culture. The fact that older drugs tend to carry more baggage also has a lot to do with it. We have learned about those drugs and their warts and blemishes simply because we have had more experience with them.

Shifting patients from more established and better understood therapies to newer ones that we have less knowledge about may sometimes have a strong medical rationale. It may be because there is a clearer understanding of the condition. An older drug’s side effects may be intolerable, with the newer one marketed as being “safer.” Any extra cost involved may seem justified. But switching patients’ drugs is a potentially dangerous practice,

which may accomplish nothing more than exchanging one set of problems for another.

According to the *British Medical Journal*, “The growing search for blockbusters in the 1970s resulted in a trend to rubbish earlier drugs in order to put new patent-protected drug classes on the market.” The BMJ points out that, in the case of treatments for mood and anxiety disorders, “Despite clear evidence that benzodiazepines were effective, they were dismissed as drugs for neurotic women, who then become

addicted.” After a brief flirtation with tricyclic antidepressants, which were also quickly considered to have too many adverse effects, the world bent to embrace the brave new world of the SSRI antidepressants.

In the 1960s, drug companies were not at all interested in depression; they didn’t think it was marketable. (David Healy’s books, including *Let Them Eat Prozac*, lay this out in fine detail). Depression was considered an easily self-cured problem, so the real market was always anxiety. With the rise of the SSRIs in the mid ‘80s, depression

THEN

Dominant disease .. **Anxiety**
Drug of choice **Alprazolam (benzodiazepine)**
Problem **Known to be addictive**
Costs **Non-patented and cheap**
Side effects **Well-known**
Suicide risk **Overdose could cause suicide**

NOW

Dominant disease .. **Depression**
Drug of choice **Effexor (SSRI / SSNI)**
Problem **Growing evidence of addiction**
Costs **Patented and expensive**
Side effects **Not yet fully understood**
Suicide risk **Prescribed use could cause suicide**

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became the drug makers' ultimate target, and the sales of anti-anxiety drugs plummeted. Since 1990, no drugs patented in the mood and anxiety area have reached the US market.

I decided that in order to dig deeper into this issue, I needed to see the "switching" phenomenon in action. A great opportunity arrived via email when I was invited to participate in an online course for pharmacists to learn about new treatments for panic disorder.

Now, I'm all for continuing education. I enjoy taking courses that are designed for pharmacists, not because I'm a pharmacist, but because as a pharmaceutical policy researcher I have a deep interest in knowing what pharmacists are learning: what kinds of messages they are getting about new diagnoses, and how the effects and side effects of new treatments are conveyed to them.

In many ways, pharmacists are among the most underappreciated members of the medical team. For many consumers, the first place they go for medical advice, or to ask a question about a drug, is the pharmacy. Pharmacists do what is arguably one of the most important jobs in the medical system: they try to get people to use prescription drugs properly.

In this vein, I took an online course in the treatment of panic disorder designed for pharmacists. Continuing pharmacy education (CPE) is like continuing legal education (CLE) for lawyers, or continuing medical education (CME) for doctors, an important way for professionals to stay on top of new developments in their discipline.

Although a pharmacist doesn't write prescriptions, her job is to make sure that people use dispensed pharmaceuticals in an informed and intelligent way. She therefore requires up-to-date, professional education to help her better counsel people to avoid drug related problems.

The CPE module taught me a lot about panic disorder, but it wasn't panic disorder, per se, that fuelled my curiosity. What I was really interested in, was why a drug company, through an "unrestricted educational grant" was spending thousands of dollars to support this module. What was in it for the company? I mean, pharmacists can't prescribe.

The module set-up provided some clues. The program featured a "case study" of a woman in her late 20s, who was taking a drug called alprazolam (also known as Xanax) to deal with her panic disorder. Xanax is a classic benzodiazepine that has been around for at least 40 years, and is often prescribed for anxiety or sleep disorders. In 1981, alprazolam was the first medication approved for panic disorder, yet some experts

question whether panic disorder was even a diagnosable illness, distinct from other kinds of mental illness. But let's put that controversy aside for a bit.

The case study was set up with the woman showing obvious signs of panic. She chokes and has difficulty breathing. She sweats and has clammy hands. She had just returned from visiting her psychiatrist, who suggested she try Effexor (venlafaxine), a newer SNRI (serotonin noradrenalin re-uptake inhibitor).

Ah, there's the rub. The patient wants the pharmacist's advice on whether she should be switched to Effexor, a newer, more expensive treatment made by – whoa, wait a minute, that's the same company that's paying for this pharmacy education module I'm working on.

The patient wants the pharmacist's advice on whether she should be switched to Effexor, a newer, more expensive treatment made by – whoa, wait a minute, that's the same company that's paying for this pharmacy education module I'm working on. OK, it's starting to make some sense.

OK, it's starting to make some sense.

So let's assume Effexor "works" for panic disorder. What is the rationale for switching someone from one drug to another? The learning module characterizes it in this way: "Antidepressants are often first-line for panic disorder because of their broad spectrum efficacy against common co-morbid conditions including depression..." and "the lack of associated abuse and dependency liabilities that are associated with benzodiazepine administration."

Allow me to translate: The reason we are recommending that you switch from a benzo to an SSRI or SSNI is because these newer ones are effective against other things you might have while you are depressed and because the benzos are addictive.

According to UK-based physician C. Heather Ashton, one of the leading experts on benzodiazepines, as many as half of long-term benzo users may be able to stop without symptoms, but it depends on how long one has taken them. If someone has taken them for a year or so, she is likely dependent, and ending that dependence can

mean severe, serious withdrawal effects that require weaning and individualized tapering.

Some have said that withdrawing from benzos is like having four or five other diseases at the same time. People experience anxiety, insomnia, irritability, gut-wrenching stomach cramps, or sensitivity to light and noise. They can become confused, depersonalized, delirious, psychotic and insomniac. It can be nasty, nasty stuff.

Luckily, the learning module does include some helpful information on trying to wean people off benzos – and a pharmacist can be really helpful here – but quitting can be a long, frustrating and difficult process. In our case study, the patient is being encouraged to move to Effexor, but what kinds of side effects might be expected?

The approved product labelling for Effexor notes that it is also associated with potentially severe withdrawal side effects, which could include fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache, insomnia and nervousness. In fact, symptoms of withdrawal can be so significant that in March 2000, the US FDA ordered Effexor's manufacturer Wyeth-Ayerst to add additional labeling: "Abrupt discontinuation or dose reduction of venlafaxine at various doses has been found to be associated with the appearance of new symptoms, the frequency of which increased with increased dose level and with longer duration of treatment... It is therefore recommended that the dosage of Effexor be tapered gradually and the patient monitored."

In case I've lost you, remember this: weaning yourself off Xanax so that you can be moved to Effexor may mean a whole new set of nasty withdrawal effects. Sounds eerily like we are trading one set of symptoms for a whole 'nuther set. There is also the issue of suicide.

One of the original reasons to get people off benzos was because the drugs could be the cause of suicide by overdose. This has always struck me as a red herring, an inducement to get people to switch to the newer stuff. But let's look at the information Health Canada released in June 2003: "Health Canada is advising Canadians that all newer anti-depressant prescription drugs, known as selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or serotonin noradrenalin re-uptake inhibitors (SNRIs), now carry stronger warnings. These new warnings indicate that patients of all ages taking these drugs may experience behavioural and/or emotional changes that may put them at increased risk of self-harm or harm to others.

continued on p. 28

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Welcome back, sunshine

NUTRISPEAK • VESANTO MELINA MS, RD

Occasionally, I have disagreements with an MD friend in Hawaii who insists that vitamin D is not a vitamin, meaning that it is not essential in our diet. What does he know? For him, it isn't essential. Simply running from his condo to the ocean each morning, in short order, the sun on his skin converts a form of cholesterol, which our bodies can make, into a precursor of vitamin D. It then travels to the liver and kidneys, where its conversion to vitamin D is complete.

Here in BC, from October through March we have limited sunlight, and even several hours of daylight won't help my body to create this vitamin. This is important because vitamin D has a tremendous impact on our capacity to absorb and retain calcium. It also reduces the loss of calcium through our urine. In these ways, vitamin D helps us form and maintain strong bones.

In recent years, scientists have recognized that vitamin D may help the immune system to stay healthy, and that it plays a role in preventing certain types of cancer, MS and depression. (A winter holiday in a sunny southern spot sure cheers me!) Due to our northern latitude and limited ultraviolet B radiation during winter months, many Canadian adults have very low levels of vitamin D, and, by the time April rolls around, children have an insufficient amount of stored vitamin D.

Those of us who don't live in places like Honolulu must rely on vitamin D-fortified foods or supplements during winter, deriving from oily fish or their livers (remember cod liver oil), or from animal skins and wool (vitamin D-3 or cholecalciferol), or from non-animal sources, such as yeast that has been exposed to light (vitamin D-2 or ergocalciferol). As very few foods contain vitamin D, it is added to soymilk, rice milk and cow's milk. Be sure to choose the fortified forms of soy or rice milk.

From April on, when the sun is higher in the sky, how much sunlight do we need? If we have fair skin, about 15 minutes on our hands, forearms and face will do the trick. If we head to Wreck Beach and strip down, just a few minutes of exposure will suffice. It's important to balance our need for vitamin D with common sense. Sunscreen with an SPF of eight or more inhibits skin vitamin D synthesis, so after a bit of sun exposure, we can slather

it on. On cloudy days, the energy of ultraviolet rays is cut in half.

Skin pigmentation and age also affect our vitamin D production. If our skin pigmentation is dark, our hands, forearms and face need about 30 to 45 minutes of daily exposure to the sun's rays. By 70 years of age, our skin's ability to produce vitamin D is only 30 percent as effective as that of a young adult. We are likely to need a supplement or fortified beverage in addition to a little sun exposure. It is important for individuals who are confined indoors to include good sources of vitamin D in their diets.

Quick chocolate shake

This shake from *Becoming Vegetarian* is an excellent source of instant energy, providing calcium, vitamin D and B-12. Select ripe bananas for freezing; they are much sweeter with less starchy aftertaste. Peel the bananas and place them whole, or in chunks, in plastic bags or containers, and freeze. Sprinkle fresh lemon juice over bananas to help prevent them from turning brown. Frozen bananas last several weeks, depending on their ripeness and the freezer temperature.

- 1 banana, fresh or frozen, peeled and broken into chunks
- 2 tsp cocoa powder
- 3/4 cup fortified soymilk or rice milk

Place banana, cocoa and fortified milk in a blender. Process until smooth. Makes 1 1/4 cups.

For more information on vitamin D, see *Becoming Vegetarian* (Melina and Davis), *Becoming Vegan* (Davis and Melina), *Raising Vegetarian Children* (Stepaniak and Melina) and <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitaminD.asp>

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian and author of seven classic books about food and nutrition. To book a personal nutrition consultation, call 604-882-6782 or email vesanto@nutrispeak.com. www.nutrispeak.com

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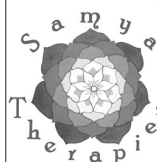
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Fight age with antioxidants

LUC MONTAGNIER PH.D.

While oxidative stress has long been recognized by biochemists, the medical world has been slower to catch on. Many factors are involved in oxidative stress generation; among environmental factors, there are radiations (UVA and UVB, x-ray from cathode tubes), aerial pollutants (carbon particles covered by carcinogens), tobacco smoke and pesticides.

Among internal organism factors, infections, particularly chronic infections, inflammatory reactions, diminution of mitochondria capacities due to aging, are most important factors. It's precisely what happens in many chronic pathologies, which are more and more common with age, such as cancers, neurodegenerative diseases or atheromatosis. Although these diseases have specific causes, they all have the presence of oxidative stress in common.

Even without the emergence of heavy pathologies, a general trend in our populations is the appearance of oxidative stress linked with age, beginning around 40 or 50. This stress could particularly lead to an increase of plasmatic oxidized glutathione and to a drop of vitamin C. The origin could include multiple mitochondria aging, which leads to a more important generation of free radicals, expansion of microbial infections due to cellular immunity decline associated with thymus involution and physical or chemical environmental factor action.

From birth, we get into a spiral, which irrevocably leads to the disappearance of (+). One genetic code controls a progressive decline of our thymus, a key organ set to work our immune defences, mainly our cells' programming, which destroys viruses, bacteria or infected cells. This genetic code could depend on retrovirus ignition, which is in our DNA – in our genome for millions of years.

We are chronically infected by germs, virus, bacteria and yeasts, which, while perfectly fixed, remain latent thanks to our immune defences. When these begin to weaken – in the second quarter of our spiral (25-50 years) – these germs begin to spread and lead to diseases. They especially produce, during their intracellular phase, free radicals, oxygen reactive species that will damage our tissues. They also promote production of free radicals by host defence reaction of our white cells.

Dr. Luc Montagnier is best known for his 1983 discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which has been considered a cause of AIDS. This discovery led directly to the development of a test for detecting the presence of HIV in blood samples. He is the co-founder of the World Foundation for AIDS Research and Prevention, and co-directs the Program for International Viral Collaboration. He has received more than 20 major awards, including the Commandeur de la Legion d'Honneur, the Lasker Prize and the Gairdner Prize.

In the years before the onset of the AIDS epidemic, Montagnier's significant discoveries concerning the nature of viruses contributed to the understanding of how viruses can alter the genetic information of host organisms, facilitating cancer research. His investigation of interferon, one of the body's defences against viruses, also opened avenues for medical treatments for viral diseases.

In 1998, Professor Montagnier expanded his research efforts to the US by accepting an endowed professorship at Queens College, New York. He is in charge of the Center for Molecular and Cellular Biology, where research efforts are focused on HIV. Professor Montagnier also continues his research efforts in Paris at both the Pasteur Institute and his international foundation AIDS Research and Prevention.

Adding to the external environmental factors, there is an imbalance between the excess of free radical excess and a low production of our antioxidants (glutathione, enzymes) or a low intake of essential nutrients (vitamins, micro-elements). Oxidative stress is a common factor in all diseases which appear in the two last quarters of our life.

We can fight this disequilibrium with balanced nutrition, an appropriate lifestyle and by managing our intake of antioxidants. Eradicating these senescence diseases will allow us to enjoy 20 or more years of an active life.

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Letting go of psychological time

THE POWER OF NOW • ECKHART TOLLE

Learn to use time in the practical aspects of your life – we may call this “clock time” – but immediately return to present-moment awareness when those practical matters have been dealt with. In this way, there will be no build-up of “psychological time,” which is identification with the past, and continuous, compulsive projection into the future.

Clock time is not just making an appointment or planning a trip. It includes learning from the past so that we don't repeat the same mistakes over and over. Setting goals and working toward them. Predicting the future by means of patterns and laws learned from the past, and taking appropriate action on the basis of our predictions.

But even here, within the sphere of practical living, where we cannot do without reference to past and future, the present moment remains the essential factor. The enlightened person's main focus of attention is always the Now, but they are still peripherally aware of time; they continue to use clock time, but are free of psychological time.

Be alert as you practise this so that you do not unwittingly transform clock time into psychological time. For example, if you made a mistake in the past and learn from it now, you are using clock time. On the other hand, if you dwell on it mentally, you make it part of your sense of self, and it has become psychological time, which is always linked to a false sense of identity.

If you set yourself a goal and work toward it, you are using clock time. You are aware of where you want to go, but you honour and give your fullest attention to the step that you are taking at this moment. If you then become excessively focused on the goal, the Now is no longer honoured. It becomes reduced to a mere stepping-stone to the future, with no intrinsic value. Clock time then turns into psychological time. Your life's journey is no longer an adventure, just an obsessive need to arrive, to attain and to “make it.” You no longer see or smell the flowers by the wayside, nor are you aware of the beauty and the miracle of life that unfolds all around you.

Let me say it again: the present moment is all you ever have. There is never a time when your life is not “this moment.” Is this not a fact?

You will not have any doubt that psychological time is a mental disease if you look at its collective manifestations: ideologies such as communism, national socialism or any nationalism,

or rigid religious belief systems, which operate under the implicit assumption that the highest good lies in the future and that therefore the end justifies the means. The end is an idea, a point in the mind-projected future, when salvation in whatever form

– happiness, fulfillment, equality, liberation – will be attained.

Not infrequently, the means of getting there involves the enslavement, torture and murder of people in the present. For example, it is estimated that as many as 50 million people were murdered to further the cause of communism, to bring about a “better world” in Russia, China and other countries. This is a chilling example of how belief in a future heaven creates a present hell. Can there be any doubt that psychological time is a serious and dangerous mental illness?

How does this mind pattern operate in your life? Are you always trying to get somewhere other than where you are? Is most of your doing just a means to an end? Is fulfillment always just around the corner, or confined to short-lived pleasures? Do you believe that if you acquire more things that you will become more fulfilled or psychologically complete? Are you waiting for a man or woman to give meaning to your life?

In the normal, mind-identified or unenlightened state of consciousness, the power and infinite creative potential that lie concealed in the Now are completely obscured by psychological time. Your life then loses its vibrancy, its freshness and its sense of wonder.

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Inner courage

UNIVERSE WITHIN • GWEN RANDALL-YOUNG

It's not having been in the dark house, but having left it that counts.

— Theodore Roosevelt

I have been thinking a lot about courage lately, partly because of Sandra Ford Walston's work and her book *Courage: The Heart and Spirit of Every Woman*. I've been thinking about the courage of everyday people facing life's demands.

Too often, we think of courage as the strength required for dramatic acts of heroism: pulling a victim out of a flaming wreck or jumping into the ocean to rescue someone who is drowning. The more life-threatening the act, the more we regard it as courageous.

There is another kind of courage, which, to my mind, is just as heroic. It is when ordinary people are terrified about something they must, or want to, undertake, and they somehow summon the inner courage to do it. They may agonize

We do have courage. The irony is that we often do not know we have it until after the fact. We decide to act in spite of our fears, and as we take that step, courage shows up.

over what lies before them. They may be immobilized by fear for weeks, months or years. They may lose sleep, suffer anxiety or shake like a leaf. Yet one day, they take the plunge and do the frightening thing.

Perhaps it is the abused woman who knows she must get herself and her children out of that environment. Perhaps the abuser has threatened to harm her or her children if she tries to leave. Often, she has no financial resources and nowhere to turn. She feels all alone. Then, one day, for the sake of her children, she makes a run for it. She may live in terror for weeks or years that he will find her. Yet, somehow, she lives with that terror and carries on. This is tremendously courageous.

It could be an individual, who is severely depressed, discouraged and feeling hopeless about life and the future. This person may suffer every day, scarcely finding the strength to carry on. Increasingly, the option to end it all becomes increasingly attractive. An end to the pain, relief from the struggle and a final peace call seductively. It would be easier for the individual to stop living. Through the fog of depression, the thought of the effect this would have on others

filters through. They think of the grief this would cause their parents, their children, their siblings and their friends. They choose to continue on with a difficult life, carrying their pain, rather than passing it on to others. This is courage.

What about the young woman who becomes pregnant and knows she cannot adequately provide for a baby. She carries the baby to term, feels its movements, goes through labour, sees its sweet face, lovingly holds it and then gives the child up for adoption. She gives an immeasurable gift to a childless couple and carries in her heart, for the rest of her life, the memory of that child.

Throughout her life, she will wonder. She will wonder what the child looks like. She will wonder how life unfolded for her child in the adoptive family. Perhaps they will connect at some point, but very possibly she will go to her grave wondering still. This is courage.

There are countless examples of ordinary individuals facing their demons or dealing with extremely difficult aspects of life. The inevitable conclusion is that courage is a trait that exists in all humans. It resides inside of us, waiting to be tapped. We may be scared, intimidated, unsure, doubtful, worried or anxious, but that does not mean that we lack courage. If we do not, or cannot, act, it means only that we have yet to decide to draw upon the courage that lies within.

We do have courage. The irony is that we often do not know we have it until after the fact. We decide to act in spite of our fears, and as we take that step, courage shows up. Magically, mysteriously, amazingly, it is the leap of faith that allows our courage to manifest.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For more articles and information about her books and CDs, visit www.gwen.ca (See display ad this issue.)

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Prayer for the World

by Lori-ann Latremouille

Ever since I was a child, I have had a deep empathy and love for nature and all its various and wonderful creatures. I remember seeing a television documentary about whaling when I was about five years old. I was horrified. How could people dishonour these intelligent and majestic creatures and treat them so cruelly?

I felt as though I were watching my friends being slaughtered, and for what purpose? Apparently, it was to provide fine oil for perfumes. I had to look away from the television screen, tears running down my cheeks. I knew that what I was seeing was unnecessary and wrong. So, at a very early age I became a bit

misanthropic. This is not to say that I didn't love and care about my family and friends. I just couldn't overlook some of the cruel and careless ways that humankind treated its fellow creatures and the environment.

As I grew up, I also became aware of how terribly people could treat one another. I could never really understand why, but I knew that much of the reason was related to fear and greed. And it seemed that the motive for mistreating other species and the environment was also rooted in thoughtless avarice. Still, deep in my heart I knew that humans were a good species and capable of tremendous acts of intelligence and love.

I have never thought that humankind is somehow separate or more special than any other

species on this Earth. Undeniably, we do have tremendous power and influence on this planet, but in my opinion, that doesn't put all other life forms a step below us. It simply puts humankind in an important and honourable position with regard to the stewardship and future of this world. And despite our greedy actions sometimes, I think we are very capable of doing a great job.

I regard the misgivings and mistakes of humankind as part of a long journey on a very large learning curve. I do think, however, that our apprenticeship must finally be coming to a crucial and decisive stage. As a species, we are now poised to show what we have learned. We can now do what we are very capable

continued on p. 35

Prayer for the World Exhibition

April 20 – May 3

April 20: Artist reception 6-9pm. Vancouver children's choir performs Lori-ann's song *Prayer for the World*, 7:30pm. Directed by Rupert Lang.

April 22: In celebration of Earth Day, people are invited to bring along an idea, poem, picture, or even just a word about how to help save the world, noon to 5pm.

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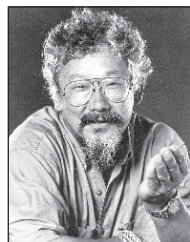
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Medical journal no place for dirty laundry

SCIENCE MATTERS • DAVID SUZUKI

Depending on your point of view, what's been going on at the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* – Canada's leading medical journal – is either a strange squabble between the academic elite and their bosses, or a tense drama about freedom of the press and the role that science plays in the media.

Sign me up for the latter.

It started in February when CMAJ's publisher abruptly fired two editors. The journal's editorial board promptly wrote a letter to the publisher requesting their reinstatement. In the meantime, an acting editor was hired, agreeing to take the position only if the publisher accepted a governance plan that would ensure editorial freedom for himself and his staff. The acting editor quit a week later. One can only guess why.

It turns out that the original editor, John Hoey, and the publisher, CMA Holdings, had been engaged in an increasingly public battle over editorial independence. In a January 3 editorial, Dr. Hoey wrote: "While the Dec. 6, 2005, issue was in preparation, the editorial independence of the journal was compromised when a CMA executive objected strenuously to a news article we were preparing on behind-the-counter access to emergency levonorgestrel (Plan B). The objection was made in response to a complaint from the Canadian Pharmacists Association, who had learned about the article when they were interviewed by our reporters. The CMA's objection was conveyed to CMAJ's editors, and to our publisher,

who subsequently instructed us to withhold the article."

[Levonorgestrel is a progestin, so-named because it is the levorotatory form of norgestrel. It is used in combination with an estrogen as an oral contraceptive, or alone as an emergency contraceptive (in Plan B) and the treatment of menstrual disorders or endometriosis.]

The publisher denied firing Dr. Hoey because of his actions. He wrote a letter, which was posted on the CMAJ website (www.cmaj.ca), wherein he stated that the journal was merely looking for a "fresh approach." Others say that the recent resignation of the acting editor is proof that Dr. Hoey was fired for insisting on editorial freedom.

It gets stranger. In response to the firings, an ad-hoc committee of the editorial board published a commentary entitled *Editorial Autonomy of CMAJ*, which included the committee's review of the events leading up to Dr. Hoey's firing. The committee concluded: "We view the episodes as raising serious concern about the integrity of the journal, its reputation and its viability in the community of top medical journals." This is posted on the journal's own website. Talk about dirty laundry!

On one hand, such a public airing of grievances could be said to be beneficial for maintaining the public's trust in important institutions, such as the CMAJ, because it lays all the cards on the table. On the other hand, publicizing internal squabbles could be make matters worse and decrease

ENVIRONMENT

the public's trust in journals, research and science in general.

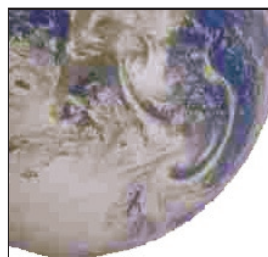
One can only hope that something good comes out of this mess. It would be naive to think that the CMAJ's tension between management and editorial staff is an isolated incident. Indeed, with so much research funded by corporations that are motivated by profit, and journals increasingly relying on advertising, the issue of editorial independence becomes more and more pressing.

Editorial freedom for a science journal, as for all media, is essential. For science journals, this freedom must be especially transparent, as editorial interference could have profound repercussions. Based on information found on the CMAJ website, the publisher of the journal appears to have crossed the line on more than one occasion.

Let's hope that this is sorted out before the CMAJ is relegated to the backwaters of journal rankings. It deserves better. A warning published on the journal's website by the editorial committee says as much, although it is overly optimistic: "In our view, any attempt by the CMA to impose its influence on the editors would be catastrophic for the CMAJ's reputation as well as damaging to the reputation of the CMA."

It's a little late for that.

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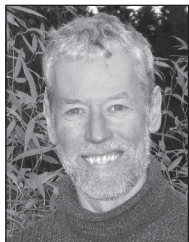
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The world is not an ice cream cone

EARTHFUTURE • GUY DAUNCEY

I had an early morning daydream recently. I was looking at the Earth and there was a great crowd of people moving across it, from the bottom left to the top right, following a route that would lead them over the top and down the other side.

The whole Earth was made of delicious food – ice cream, cheese, chocolate, croissants, coffee, desserts, quiches, curries – and the people were eating her. As they ate, they moved up the path. From my perspective, however, I knew that when they rounded the top and looked over the other side, they were going to have an awful shock; the other side was a barren clearcut. They'd already been there, and there was nothing left.

We are eating our planet. Since 1950, we have taken 90 percent of all the large fish – tuna, cod and swordfish – from the world's oceans. In the deep seas, where fish reproduce much more slowly, our plundering has caused some stocks to fall by 99.6 percent. From a biological perspective, we are consuming everything there is: topsoil, forests, minerals, fish, water, land and wildlife. And we've only just begun. All over the developing world, from Moscow to Mexico City, people are dreaming of the day when they will be able to join the banquet and get their share.

This is so unreal. We are the culmination of the hopes, hardships and efforts of hundreds of generations. Our ancestors have slowly pieced together the skills and technologies that make it possible for us to strip the oceans, clear-cut the forests, suck the oil, develop the subdivisions and drive to the megastores to feast on materials from the farthest corners of the Earth. Did they realize that we would take the lot, and leave nothing for the future.

On Vancouver Island in the 19th century, settler Robert Dunsmuir, a lowly coal miner from Scotland, became very successful as a mine owner. In 1879, he won a contract to build the railway from Nanaimo to Victoria, for which he received two million acres of land, plus all the

trees, minerals, foreshore rights and \$750,000. The First Nations' lands were appropriated, without consultation.

Robert's son, James Dunsmuir, became the premier of BC in 1900. Together, they built two castles in Victoria: Craigdarroch and Hatley. James had 12 children, and the Dunsmuir offspring tucked right into their inheritance. Between drinking, gambling and family quarrels, they spent the lot. Today, nothing remains except the castles.

The moral has to do with stewardship. When families have retained their wealth for a long time, they know to live off the earnings, not the capital. When a family has no such history, its members tend to get over-excited and blow the lot.

This is our dilemma. For 99 percent of the planet's people, this is the first time they have had access to such wealth. There is no appreciation of our common ecological wealth, and no instinct to preserve it. We are eating the planet as if it were ice cream.

How do we generate a deep, abiding sense of the value of Earth's ecological riches, so that we preserve them and live off their interest, rather than their capital? How do we internalize this into the way the world's corporations run their affairs? How do we internalize it into our accountancy, so that we count the forests, topsoil and fish stocks as capital to be preserved, not as lottery winnings to be splurged?

Every household, organization, business and government needs to start doing green bookkeeping. With each item that we purchase, we need to ask, "Are we taking this from Earth's ecological capital, or does it come from interest? Locally grown organic food derives from interest; so does sustainably managed timber, certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. Ikea is a good example of a corporation that is moving to source its materials from the Earth's interest, not its capital, using The Natural Step organization's road map. We all need to do the same.

Guy Dauncey is the author of Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change and president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association.

Our ancestors have slowly pieced together the skills and technologies that make it possible for us to strip the oceans, clear-cut the forests, suck the oil, develop the subdivisions and drive to the megastores.

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A child's determination can make a big difference. Photo: Brandon Striliski

Get down and dirty on Earth Day

The Evergreen non-profit organization has held Earth Day celebrations at Everett Crowley Park in Vancouver since 2001. Over the years, the event has grown into a large-scale community celebration, engaging volunteers to help with the continual restoration of a nature park that was once Vancouver's central landfill.

Evergreen, the only national organization dedicated to community-based urban restoration, is a national, non-profit, environmental organization with a mandate to help Canadians bring nature back into their cities. The organization motivates people to create and sustain healthy, natural outdoor spaces, and provides the practical tools for success through its three core programs: Learning Grounds (transforming school grounds); Common Grounds (working on publicly accessible land); and Home Grounds (for the home landscape). www.evergreen.ca

In partnership with the Everett Crowley Park committee and the Vancouver park board, Evergreen invites you to participate in this year's Earth Day Vancouver Celebration.

Evergreen's 6th annual Earth Day celebration, April 22, 11am – 3pm, Everett Crowley Park (Kerr Street and S.E. Marine Drive)

Earth Day Vancouver

The Vancouver celebration is a free, family-oriented public event. Participants can enjoy a variety of activities:

- Come out and lend a hand. There are more than 700 trees to plant and lots of invasive species to remove.
- Mandala-making
- Children's activities
- Musical performances
- Guided nature tours with Manfred Hagen
- Sale of native plants and more!

For more information or to volunteer, contact Shelley Milstein, Earth Day coordinator at 604-689-0766 (ext. 29) or shelley@evergreen.ca. Volunteer sessions include a tour of Everett Crowley Park and training for planting and invasive species removal.

Pre-event workshops

Invasive species removal
April 8, 10am - 12 noon
Everett Crowley Park
(Meet at the Kerr Street parking lot.)

Make a mandala
April 9, 1:30 - 3pm
Organic art-making for Earth Day

Champlain Heights Community Centre (near East 54th Street and Kerr Road). The Secret Lantern Society will conduct a free workshop on the history of mandalas and how to work with natural materials to create ephemeral artworks. Natural materials from the removal of invasive plant species will be used to create mandala-inspired art at the Earth Day event in the park.

All workshops are open to the public. To register, contact, Shelley Milstein at 604-689-0766 (ext. 29).

Evolution of a park

In 1944, the site of Everett Crowley Park (formerly Kerr Road Park) became Vancouver's central landfill for residential waste, and, subsequently, all of the city's refuse. Since few restrictions were placed on what could be discarded, spontaneous fires erupted, sometimes burning underground. The local community spoke out and the landfill was closed in 1967.

In the 1970s, a plan to develop the land into a nine-hole extension of the Fraserview Golf Course was abandoned when the Fraserview and Champlain Heights communities, as well as the Vancouver Natural History Society, expressed displeasure. A 1972 survey showed

Canada celebrates Earth Day

All events are free.

Victoria: 25th annual Earth Day celebration, April 22

The event includes a parade, entertainment and information booths. Meet in Centennial Square at noon for the Earth Walk. Parade proceeds along Government Street to the Legislature Building. To book a table (\$35), contact Steve Filipovic, Earth Walk coordinator, 250-216-5903.

Calgary: Earth Day movie marathon, April 22

The Clean Calgary Association EcoStore Lounge presents four educational films about the environment: *The End of Suburbia*, *Affluenza*, *Organic Prophecies*, and *Crapshoot*, 10:30am to 3:30pm. Seating limited. www.cleancalgary.org

Edmonton Earth Day, April 23

Canada's largest Earth Day event has music, food exhibits, free workshops and lots of fun activities for the kids. Hawrelak Park, 12 noon to 7pm. www.earthday.ca

Toronto: Earth Day and Tree Planting Festival, April 22

Bring the family and plant a tree. Event includes workshops, eco-seminars and free children's shows. Downsview Park, 12 noon to 4pm. www.earthday.ca

that local residents wanted the park preserved in its natural state. Alternatively, the community wanted a combination botanical garden and picnic area.

In the mid '80s, the Killarney-Champlain Citizen Association, the Champlain Heights Community Association, and the Vancouver Natural History Society appealed to the Vancouver park board to preserve the site as a nature park. In August 1985, the board approved the proposal.

Since 1985, the Everett Crowley Park committee (formerly the Kerr Road Park committee) has spent countless hours restoring the park. In 1986, the committee successfully bid to have the park board spend \$50,000 on site development. In 1989, the Crowley family donated \$20,000 toward improvements.





The Cuban story

THE ORGANIC WAY • MARYA SKRYPICZAJKO

In 1989, when the USSR collapsed, Cuba's high-input agricultural system also broke down. Cuba had focused on growing tobacco and sugar for export to Eastern Bloc countries willing to pay their trading partners a premium. In exchange, Cuba received oil, farm machinery, chemical pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and vast amounts of food. Now, the country is an international model for self-sufficient, sustainable organic agriculture.

While Cubans grew little of their own food, thousands of people had been educated for careers in agriculture, studying high-input farming of their staple crops, including learning how to produce greater yields of sugarcane with the help of pesticides and fertilizers and which combinations of grain feed and hormones create the most productive dairy cows.

With the collapse of the Soviet empire, Cubans suffered severe shortages of energy and food. Officials were forced to redirect their agricultural efforts toward domestic food production to avert nation-wide hunger and they had to take a more natural, non-chemical approach.

Initially, the soil was in poor condition and farmers had little knowledge of organic methods. The situation improved quickly, however, as agronomists shifted their research to composting, companion planting, biological controls and natural fertilizers. Harness and blacksmith shops reopened. During the first few years, much food was lost, but eventually research paid off and yields increased.

Today, Cuba's system is not 100 percent organic, but it is close, with minimal use of fertilizers, pesticides and even machinery. It is an interesting approach: Cuban farmers originally took up organic practices out of necessity, rather than due to a philosophic bent, but most farmers now embrace the organic philosophy.

The organic model's success is due to both the large number of people involved in farming and the urban gardens, locally referred to as "organoponicos." Without a solid transport infrastructure, urban gardens are necessary for Cuba's

food security and thousands of organoponicos dot 86,000 acres of urban land, most of them situated on previously vacant lots. Havana alone has more than 200. These farms are state organized, worker managed and intensely cultivated, but most feel and look more like community gardens. Extra food typically ends up in hospitals, schools or retirement home kitchens.

Although all Cuban farmers must grow enough food to meet government quotas, they are permitted to sell the excess at farmers' markets. For all its successes, the new system also has its shortcomings. Not all Cubans

have access to a wide variety of fresh produce. Prices for some foods are still too high for the poorest Cubans to afford and

meat and dairy are perpetually in short supply.

For decades, Cuba had few trading partners and the US enforced strict trade sanctions. In 2000, the US began softening agricultural trade sanctions and Cuba started importing millions of dollars worth of wheat, beef and apples. Cuba pays high prices for the American products, perhaps with an eye to encouraging the US to soften sanctions even further.

While some Cubans may support non-organic food imports, their sustainable model risks destruction if world trade continues to open to them. They could import chemically produced food, much of it subsidized for export, at a lesser cost. There is also the fear that huge multinational seed and chemical companies will force their products onto Cuban farmers and pesticides and fertilizers will supplant the organic model. Furthermore, would people even want to be farmers if they had other options?

At this point, Cuban government officials and organic farmers claim they will not be going back to the old system that degrades the environment. Environmentalists and sustainable farmers worldwide are hoping they have the resolve to stand their ground.

Marya Skrypczajko is the author of BC the Organic Way – Where to Find Organic Food in British Columbia. www.bctheorganicway.com

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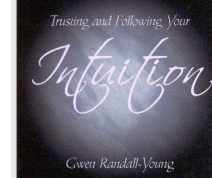
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Top tips for terrific tomatoes

ON THE GARDEN PATH • CAROLYN HERRIOT

ORGANICS

Finding the best tomato variety for your region and garden microclimate requires some experimenting. A tomato that astounds one gardener may disappoint another; growth, flavour and yield are dependent on weather, soil and the garden's microclimate. It makes a world of difference whether you grow tomatoes in a garden that is subject to cool, ocean breezes, compared to one that is protected inland.

Extend the harvest season by growing a diversity of tomatoes with varying ripening times. Choose early, mid and late season cultivars, and take note of those that perform best and the ones you find most flavourful.

Tomatoes are grown for a variety of uses: salads, snacking, slicing, soups, canning, sauces and paste. Choose a variety that meets your needs. A uniformly round tomato, such as Moneymaker, is perfect for salads; a beefsteak variety, such as Costoluto Fiorentino, is a juicy slicer, whereas a jumbo cherry like Gardener's Delight makes for great eating and snacking.

Tomatoes are either *indeterminate*, vines that produce fruit throughout the season, or *determinate*, compact bushy plants with a shorter period of harvest, such as patio tomatoes. If growing mostly determinate varieties, I recommend growing some indeterminates too. You can then pick tomatoes throughout the entire growing season.

Tomato seeds need warm temperatures for germination and to grow happily. Six-week-old seedlings are ready to be hardened off for outdoors, but make sure that the ground has warmed up first. Black landscape fabric over the beds warms the soil by day and holds in warmth at night. You can also use cloches or bell jars to cover newly transplanted plants.

A neutral soil pH of six to 6.5 is ideal. Prepare the hole with compost and a handful of slow-release, organic fertilizer that contains lime, with a balanced NPK around 6-8-6. Tomatoes love fish heads planted underneath them, if you can get your hands on some.

Here's the trick to getting bumper yields of tomatoes: when transplanting, strip all the leaves off the stem except for the top truss of three or four leaves. Dig a deep hole, or lay the tomato plant diagonally in a shallow trench, and bury most of the

stem. New roots develop on the stem planted underground, which provides the tomato with more nutrients.

Determinate varieties are more compact and can be supported by cages. For taller indeterminate varieties, you will need a sturdy, five-foot cedar stake. Proper staking and tying exposes the tomato plant to sunlight, which results in increased fruit production.

Fertilizing weekly with liquid seaweed that has a high phosphorus content boosts fruit production. Don't overwater; a deep soaking once a week is better than several light waterings. Erratic watering causes fruit splitting and blossom end rot.

Suckers are sprouts which grow between the main stem and the leaf axils. Removing suckers directs the plant's energy from vine production to fruit production. I remove suckers from indeterminate (vining) plants diligently, and train to one or two main stems. Beware of removing suckers on determinate (compact) plants, as this cuts back on tomato production.

Tomato blight is the most serious tomato disease, especially after long periods of wet weather in August and September. Blight can wipe out a whole crop in a matter of days, if left unchecked. It is caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans*, and first appears as brown blotches on the leaves and then blackened stems on the plants. To control blight, remove all infected plant debris from the garden and do not compost it. Once blight shows up in your garden, practise crop rotation diligently in future years to prevent reoccurrence.

Leaf curl early in summer is caused by viral diseases spread to plants by aphids, and by sap on fingers and tools. Practise good hygiene and aphid control. Yellowing between veins of older leaves, which then turn brown, is due to magnesium deficiency. Digging one teaspoon of epsom salt – magnesium sulphate – into the hole when transplanting will help prevent this problem.

Excerpted from A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide by Carolyn Herriot. \$29.95. Earthfuture Publications, Victoria, BC. Available at Banyen Books, Duthie Books, or at www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath



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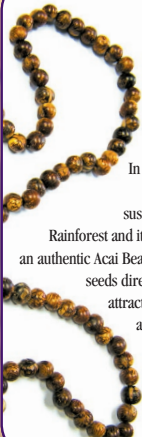
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The good body

Beyond *The Vagina Monologues*

EVE ENSLER

In the midst of war, in a time of escalating global terrorism, when civil liberties are disappearing as fast as the ozone layer, when one out of three women in the world will be beaten or raped in her lifetime, why write a play about my stomach?

Maybe because my stomach is something I feel I have control over, or because I hope my stomach is something I could get control over. Maybe because I see how my stomach has come to occupy my attention, and I see that other women's stomachs or butts or thighs or hair or skin have come to occupy their minds, so that we have very little left for war or anything else.

When a group of ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged women in the US were asked about the one thing they would change in their lives if they could, the majority said they would "lose weight." Maybe I identify with these women because

I've bought into the idea that if my stomach were flat then I would be good, and I would be accepted, admired, important, loved.

Maybe because for most of my life I have felt wrong, dirty, guilty and bad, and my stomach is the carrier, the pouch for all that self-hatred. Maybe because my stomach has become the repository for my sorrow, my childhood scars, my unfulfilled ambition, my unexpressed rage. Like a toxic dump, it is where the explosive trajectories collide – the Judeo-Christian imperative to be good; the patriarchal mandate that women be quiet, be less; the consumer-state imperative to be better, which is based on the assumption that we are born wrong and bad, and that being better always involves spending money, lots of money.

I began writing *The Good Body* during my work on my first play *The Vagina Monologues*, and it all started with me and my particular obsession with my "imperfect" stomach.

I am certainly not alone. I have been to over 50 countries in the past six years as a result of *The Vagina Monologues*. I have talked

with women in surgical centres in Beverly Hills, on the beaches of Rio, in the gyms of Mumbai, New York and Moscow, in the crowded and hectic beauty salons in Istanbul, Johannesburg and Rome. Most of them loathed at least one part of their body. There was always one part that they longed to change, that they had a medicine cabinet full of products devoted to transforming or hiding or reducing or straightening. Just about every woman believed that if she could just get that part right, everything else would work out. It is an endless, heartbreaking campaign.

Tell the image-makers and the plastic surgeons that you are not afraid to age. That what you fear most is the death of imagination and originality and metaphor and passion. Then be bold and love your body. Stop fixing it.

The Good Body is my prayer, my attempt to help women break free so that we may spend more time running the world rather than running away from it; so that we can become good in the true sense of good; so that we may be consumed by the sorrow of the world, rather than consuming to avoid the

sorrow and suffering. It is my hope, my desire, that we will all refuse to be Barbie, that we will say no to the loss of the particular and unconventional, whether it be a voluptuous woman in a silk blouse, or a woman with defining lines of character in their face, or olive-tone skin or wild, curly hair.

I am stepping off the capitalist treadmill. I am going to take a deep breath and find a way to survive not being flat or perfect. I am inviting you to join me, to stop trying to be anything, anyone other than who you are. I was moved by women in Africa who lived close to the Earth and didn't understand what it meant to not love their body. Can you imagine the energy that would be unleashed if women stopped obsessing about their bodies? Tell the image-makers and the plastic surgeons that you are not afraid to age. That what you fear most is the death of imagination and originality and metaphor and passion. Then be bold and love your body. Stop fixing it.

It was never broken.

From the introduction to The Good Body by Eve Ensler (Willard 2004).

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Salmon artwork by Celia Brauer

Depressed continued from p.11

In other words, the two concerns prompting a switch from benzos – addiction and suicide – also apply to the recommended replacement drug.

Depression is one of the fastest rising diagnoses made by office-based physicians; visits to a physician for depression have almost doubled since 1994. Furthermore, in 2004, 81 percent of depression-related visits resulted in a recommendation for an SSRI or a related drug, and the cost impact has been enormous. From 1993 to 2000, drug sales have increased 347 percent, and we have seen an increase in prescriptions for both benzos and SSRIs. In BC, from 1996 to 2002, benzo use increased by 11 percent, yet the use of antidepressants increased by 73 percent over the same time period.

Janet Currie of Victoria is probably one of Canada's leading experts on benzodiazepines and the effects of SSRIs. She recently wrote a report entitled *The Marketization of Depression: the Prescribing of SSRI Antidepressants to Women* (see www.whp-apsf.ca/pdf/SSRIs.pdf), wherein she notes that the drugging of depression and anxiety is largely a female issue, since two-thirds of SSRI users are women. Further, "The clinical trial results for SSRIs raise many questions about their effectiveness, and yet hundreds of thousands of Canadian women are being exposed to these potent brain chemicals, sometimes for many, many years despite their many risks and side effects."

She would agree that shifting patients from benzos to antidepressants is not just costly, resulting in huge profits to big pharma, but it often ignores the alternatives, such as talking to someone or engaging in exercise therapy, both which may be effective as non-drug treatments for anxiety or depression.

Currie reminds me that history can be seen to continually repeat itself. Citing the 10-20-30 rule – that it takes us about 30 years to realistically view a class of drugs in its entirety, both the benefits and the harms – she points to Joseph Glenmullen's book *The Antidepressant Solution: A Step by Step Guide to Safely Overcoming Antidepressant Withdrawal, Dependence and Addiction*.

Following the arrival of a new class of drugs on the market, it takes at least a decade for physicians to even become aware of its most serious side effects, partially due to the fact that regulatory agencies such as Health Canada have such weak systems for monitoring side effects. When serious effects are noted, the pharmaceutical companies go into denial, and it takes another decade to actually collect enough data and study what the

serious problems may be.

Although patient advocates are now sounding the alarm, it will take another decade before regulatory agencies and professional organizations act to change treatment guidelines and prescribing patterns. By that time, 30 years hence, what was "new" has become old, and drug companies have come out with an even "newer" – read more patented and therefore profitable – drug. We have seen this with the benzos and the tricyclics, and we're starting to see the same pattern with the SSRIs, as new treatments, such as Effexor, arrive.

Currie sees that one of the biggest holes in the health system is its failure to provide people the help to get off unneeded or harmful drugs like the addictive benzodiazepines. She helped start the Psychiatric Medication Awareness Group (www.psychmedaware.org), and is one of the West Coast's brightest lights for raising awareness and disseminating knowledge about psychiatric drugs.

While my online pharmacy module may guide pharmacists to address the issue of dependence and withdrawal for drugs like Xanax, in Canada, no government-funded services are available to help people safely withdraw from benzodiazepine addiction. While you're basically on your own, you could get in touch with groups around the world doing this work as part of the benzo awareness network. Two notable groups are www.benzo.org.uk, a UK-based group focused on benzodiazepine addiction, withdrawal and recovery, and Tranquilliser Recovery and New Existence (TRANX) in Australia, www.tranx.org.au.

The pharmacy module dryly sums up the situation: The "...present case serves to illustrate the potential severity of alprazolam rebound and how its long-term use can exacerbate the symptoms for which it was originally administered." Fine enough, but what about Effexor's side effects? Is it actually useful for panic disorder?

Listed side effects for Effexor include anxiety, agitation, panic attacks, insomnia, irritability, hostility, aggressiveness, impulsivity, akathisia (psychomotor restlessness), hypomania and mania.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Alan Cassels is the co-author of *Selling Sickness: How the World's Biggest Pharmaceutical Companies Are Turning Us All into Patients*, and a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. He is also the founder of *Media Doctor Canada* (www.mediadoctor.ca), which evaluates the reporting of medical treatments in Canada's media.

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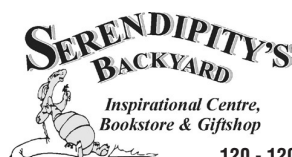
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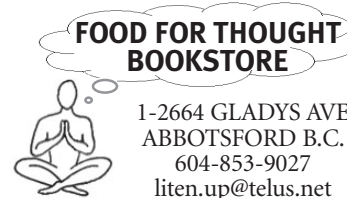


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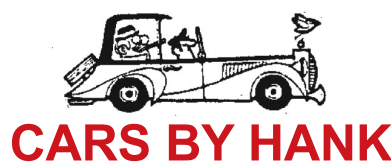


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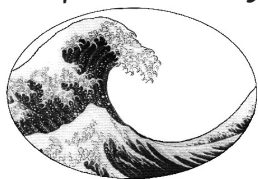
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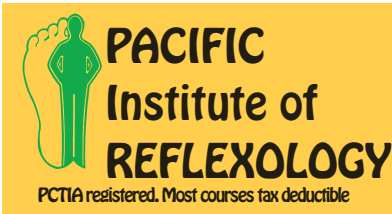
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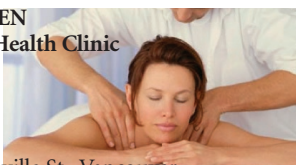
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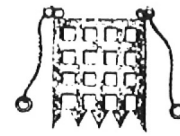
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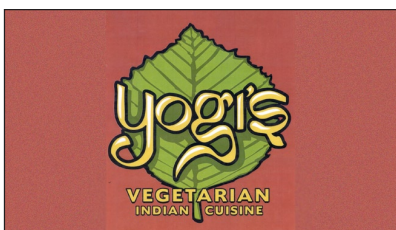
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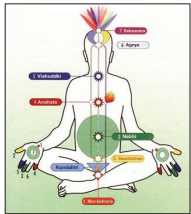
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It's better to lose some of the battles in the struggles for your dreams than to be defeated without ever knowing what you're fighting for. —Paulo Coelho

Prayer continued from p. 16

of, and that is to heal and protect this beautiful planet.

I want to contribute whatever I can to this tremendous healing process. I have been a professional visual artist for more than 20 years. Self-taught, I discovered my imagery simply by allowing my subconscious mind to open. My images grow from my mind the way that plants grow from the soil. It is a very natural and easy process. On paper, I draw the lines and forms that first come to mind. Vegetation, trees, animals, human beings and all the elements seem to flow together, interlocking comfortably and peacefully. My

visual language has developed and matured considerably over the years, but there has always been one basic theme: that all living forms are intertwined and connected in one universal field.

We artists are often asked about the meaning and purpose of our work. At times, it was hard for me to verbally express what I was drawing. I knew that what I was creating had a tremendously strong healing aspect, and that strength was not in a particular narrative or theme of an individual piece or show. Instead, it was the physical philosophy of the imagery, the way that all the forms fit together.

When the image that I call *Prayer*

for the World first appeared in my sketchbook, I sensed that all my years of creating had culminated in this work. At the same time, I had written a song, which I also called *Prayer for the World*, as it aligned perfectly with the sketch. For the first time in my life, I found that my songwriting and imagery converged, and it suddenly dawned on me what all of my creative activities were about: to express the healing and loving potential of my species. It was so simple. It was what I knew and felt as a child growing up. All this time, it was right before my eyes, and I had finally realized it.

With this new exhibition of my drawings and song, I hope to give

the world this most beautiful and precious message that was given to me through my artwork. I think this is the reason and purpose for my becoming an artist. This verbal and visual prayer exists in everyone, in some form. This is my version that I want to share. My dream is to inspire others to find and express their own way to love and heal our world. We all love living on this beautiful planet, and we all want to look after it. It is written in our hearts and minds to do so. When we all decide to put our minds together for this most special purpose, I have no doubt that we can save, nurture and protect our unique and glorious world.

No more tears

WISE TEENS • STEPHANIE THEVAMANORATHAN

Chris held the picture frame in his hands, looking at a photo of his sister Holly, taken last year. She was smiling in the picture, but her eyes told a different story. She hadn't gone to school happy on picture day like other children, for that had been the morning that their mother Debra had smashed bottles in the kitchen, in one of her frequent drunken rages.

Chris had no more tears. It had been a week since it happened. Each time he closed his eyes, he could remember. As soon as Chris had opened the door that day, he could hear his mother utter a string of profanities. He had stepped in wearily, heaving the weight of his schoolbag with his slouched shoulders. He did not scrunch up his nose, as he was used to the constant smell of smoke in the house.

"Chris!" his mother called. Chris sighed. He had wanted to go past her silently, so as not to have to talk to her. He dropped his bag at the foot of the stairs, and slowly entered the living room. His mother was sprawled on the couch. Several bottles were on the floor, and she held one tightly with her cold fingers.

"Get me a pack of cigarettes," his mother ordered. Her voice was lazy, yet commanding, and her eyes were half-closed.

"Yes, Debra," he replied. He had been calling his mother by her first name from a young age, when he realized that she would never live up to his expectations of a real mother.

"Hurry up," she drawled, her voice fading as Chris walked into the kitchen.

After he'd tossed the cigarettes at her, he went up to study.

Holly was at her friend's house, where she stayed most afternoons at Chris' urging. He didn't want her to become sick from all the second-hand smoke.

Chris couldn't concentrate. He thought about his future, and what would happen if, one day, Debra weren't there. Would he be able to

take care of his six-year-old sister? He'd be 18 in a few months, and he certainly was more responsible than his father, who'd left when Holly was several months old. It might not be that much different if his mother weren't there, since it was Chris who took care of Holly when his mother was too drunk to care, which was most of the time.

Holly was at home, and in her room. She was reading, which was her escapism. Chris was downstairs, cooking instant noodles while the TV blared in the living room. He was done cooking when his mother stumbled into the kitchen. She was shaking and banging open all the cupboards and drawers.

"What are you doing?" Chris asked loudly, although he knew very well that his mother was looking for the hidden stash of alcohol. However, she did not know that he had taken it out this morning and hid the bottles in the backseat of his car, planning to get rid of them. He'd also taken her car keys, to prevent her from going out to buy more.

"Where'd you put them?" she yelled, throwing the pot of still-hot noodles off the stove.

Holly, charging down the stairs, started screaming as Debra threw things about in the kitchen. She stopped and just watched, crying.

"Go upstairs, Holly," Chris told her, raising his voice above the ruckus. "Stay in your room."

Holly disobeyed her brother for the first time in her life. He had always been protective of her, not wanting her to see what the "bad drink" and the cigarettes did to her mother. This time, however, she wanted to watch her mother.

Debra turned around and saw

Holly. Not noticing the eggs, tomatoes and colourful mess covering the walls and floors, she walked towards her, stumbling.

"This is all your fault!" Debra screeched, and Holly cowered. Her looming, threatening figure scared her.

"Leave her alone!" Chris shouted, and pushed Debra away from Holly, thereby making her even angrier.

It was Chris who took care of Holly when his mother was too drunk to care, which was most of the time.

In the next few seconds, there was a commotion of screaming, pushing and slapping.

In the end, Holly was on the floor, crying, Debra rushed out to the living room like a tornado, and

Chris tried to comfort his sister.

It was the first time that Debra had struck Holly. Her cheek was red and her arm hurt where her mother had grabbed her, her nails digging into her skin.

Chris couldn't take anymore.

He needed to think. After he carried Holly to her room, he took his keys and jumped into his car. He rode around a bit, until he took a break at the park.

Chris closed his eyes and tried not to think about anything at all. But he couldn't. He put up with this depressing daily existence so that he could take care of Holly, but he couldn't do it. Debra abusing Holly was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

Chris opened his eyes and noticed something through the rear-view mirror. The bottles.

Why not, a voice inside him questioned.

It's wrong, and it's what made Debra the monster she was today.

Just one drink.

No.

Chris had never drunk a sip of alcohol in his life. He had even

forbidden Holly to take the "bad drink." Who knows what he would do if he succumbed to the desire to escape the present by drinking?

After several moments, Chris reached into the back. Just this one time and no more. He just wanted to get away from here. Just one drink.

One drink led to two.

Two, four, six drinks later, it was time to leave.

Chris had no perception of where he was, and he drove meaninglessly. He welcomed the sweet oblivion from harsh reality, and he drove fast. The dots of streetlights whizzed past until they came closer and closer to each other the faster he went, resulting in a straight line of light.

He was in his neighbourhood now, and his eyes hurt. Chris could feel the beginning of what would be a pounding headache. But he was okay. He could take it.

"Darn!" he exclaimed. He had missed his house. He reversed and then sharply turned into the driveway, a bit too fast. He heard a noise, bumped over something and slammed into the garage.

Chris was wrong. He did have more tears. If only he had known that Holly had been waiting for him outside the house that night, in the driveway. She was alone, scared, and had fallen asleep, unknowingly.

And he had killed her.

Reprinted with permission from Teensmag, a publication written by teens about alcohol and drug abuse prevention. The editor and publisher is Dr. Merv Mason, a psychologist with many years of experience in alcohol and drug-abuse education and prevention. This publication is a useful resource tool in helping to educate teens about the dangers of substance abuse. It has contributed an important part in drug awareness and prevention education over the past 17 years. It is distributed through corporate sponsorship to BC secondary schools, police detachments, the Native community and substance abuse centres.

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On track zodiac

APRIL 2006 • ILONA HEDI GRANIK



ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 19)
An animal will let you know when it needs something, so gather a few tips from nature. Rather than second-guessing your instincts, simply ask for what you want. It will come to you. Not all Aries are egoists, as it's all about being clear in your communications. Relax, and put your toe in the water of experience.



TAURUS (Apr 20 – May 21)
You feel as if your sense of touch is alive and your emotions vibrant. You could ride this wave of bliss for as long as you stay in the swim of things. This means that you could find the key to maintaining your balance in giving and receiving love.



GEMINI (May 22 – Jun 20)
Energy is something you have in great abundance and you are at a high point with your goals. Water could be the element that will calm, soothe and replenish your batteries. Recuperate, and then make a fresh start. Your physical body will serve you as you balance the elements in your system.



CANCER (Jun 21 – Jul 22)
If you embark on a new healing regimen, the effect will have staying power. You are on a plan that has lasting effects in your life. Scents and aromas and getting more fresh air will assist your lungs in their desire to expand and take in life more fully. Why not get outside and breathe?



LEO (Jul 23 – Aug 22)
Your desires might be mixed with a sense of duty. The hard, cold facts may be where your focus is. You could choose to surround yourself in the hub of activity where people come together to think big thoughts. Concentration is the elixir that feeds your spirit.



VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sep 22)
The Virgo maiden – all grace and beauty – gathers wisdom. You have more stability and can distribute your services to the needy. You are an emissary of significance. Your words reach people who seek meaning and you deliver the message. You can now tap into the heart of truth and worth.



LIBRA (Sep 23 – Oct 22)
You have mustered much strength over the last months. Now is the time to create something innovative. Perhaps impulsive behaviour got the best of you, but you got clearer about your goals. Friends will assist you in your journey; don't be afraid to ask for help.



SCORPIO (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
Much of what you say and do now has merit and possibility. There could be a reward or a discussion about a higher-ranking placement in your work and your spiritual practice. Benevolence cascades into your day-to-day activities.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 – Dec 21)
As Pluto continues moving back over your sun sign, it will turn up the heat on anything you've swept under the rug of unconsciousness. As it burns a path to the truth, you will have the chance to address unresolved fears and disturbances. You can handle it and do great things.



CAPRICORN (Dec 22 – Jan 19)
Relationship has new importance for you and a possible new alliance. You don't follow the trend as much as you follow your heart, and now the alignment has a twist of fate within it. Your friendships and co-workers become more interesting and beneficial.



AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 19)
You could be in for a stark awakening. If there ever was a time to let go and "let good," it is now. You might try to be more flexible, as you could be in for some sudden, foundation-shaking events. You will dance through the turbulence with your usual dignity and unique flair.



PISCES (Feb 20 – Mar 20)
The big changes for this year are just beginning. Rebellious feelings have dissipated for the time being, replaced with feelings of inspiration and creativity. If you plan to move within the coming months, chances are that you break new ground and create with a divine spark.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 31 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. ilona23@shaw.ca www.heartlightcentre.com

The Harper-Emerson affair

When Vancouver-Kingsway MP and former Liberal cabinet minister David Emerson was sworn in on February 6 as a member of the Conservative cabinet, he not only crossed the floor, he crossed the Canadian people.

Democracy – meaning rule by the will of the people – is under attack by the very people who have sworn an oath to protect our country. Prime Minister Stephen Harper can't be relied upon to stand up for democracy. He personally endorsed negotiations with Emerson, talks which began less than 24 hours after the January election.

David Emerson clearly doesn't understand democracy. The nouveau-Conservative cabinet minister sees nothing wrong with what he's been party to. In a letter sent out last month to aggrieved Vancouver-Kingsway constituents, Emerson as much as says "sorry, but I'd do it again."

Knowing no law could touch them, Harper and his middleman in the negotiations, former West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast MP John Reynolds, from the start brashly admitted that they had been in talks with Emerson the day after Canadians went to the polls.

Seemingly oblivious to the concerns of Emerson's constituents, both Emerson and Harper have steadfastly refused to acknowledge the rising tide of anger and sense of betrayal felt by Canadians across the country. At every possible turn both have made matters worse by insulting citizens who feel they've been wronged.

No matter what the justification is, no matter whom one voted for in this riding, not one single person voted for what they got. That's not real democracy.

Vancouver/Kingsway ground zero for democracy

Located in the east-central area of Vancouver, more than 115,000 people live in the riding that ranges from Oak Street to Boundary and from 16th Avenue to 41st Avenue. It's a largely middle and working-class urban riding where 64 percent speak a language other than English or French as their mother tongue. In the past, the riding has been represented at the federal level by either a Liberal or NDP MP except on one occasion in 1958 when the seat went to a Progressive Conservative during Diefenbaker's sweep of the nation.

It's a place where people live and generally go about their own business without generating or getting involved in controversy. So why are



people, eight weeks later, still up in arms about the Emerson affair?

Understanding the issues

Over time people's understanding of the Emerson affair has deepened. At first, many experienced a visceral reaction to the hypocrisy of a Liberal cabinet minister being in negotiations to join the Conservative cabinet less than 24 hours after being elected. Emerson's actions, following Harper's orders, have further put our system of electoral politics and governance in disrepute.

As further layers of the rotting onion are peeled back, many now realize that political parties do have a role to play in shaping policies which affect us all, and at times the differences in vision are profound. Emerson, the nouveau Conservative, must by rules of conduct now oppose many policies that he staunchly defended as a member of former prime minister Paul Martin's cabinet. One such example concerns the evident differences in policy each party holds towards child care.

At the core of the issue lies another level of concern that the dual appointments further undermine the notion that the federal cabinet should be composed of elected parliamentarians. This dangerous road leads ultimately to an all-appointed, completely unelected, US-style cabinet.

continued on p. 44

No matter what the justification is, no matter whom one voted for in Vancouver-Kingsway, not one single person voted for what they got. That's not real democracy.



Making *Birdsong*: Rumi poetry performed with chorus and tar

INTERVIEW WITH COLEMAN BARKS AND ED HENDERSON • JOSEPH ROBERTS

The Vancouver Chamber Choir and the Iranian Canadian Cultural Association present the premiere of Birdsong, Edward Henderson's newly extended setting of Rumi poems for the unusual combination of chorus and tar, a Persian plucked instrument used for performing classical Persian music. Rumi's verse is exquisite in both the original Farsi and in the new English adaptations by Coleman Barks. Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, April 28. Tickets through Ticketmaster, 604-280-3311.

Common Ground: There are so many connections between poetry, music, art and living authentically in the world.

Coleman Barks: Rumi says that knowing that conscious decisions and personal memory are much too small a place to live, every human being streams at night into the loving nowhere, or during the day in some absorbing work.

One way of breaking out of the container of the personality of conscious decisions and personal memory is to find some work that you kind of disappear in while you're doing it. That's what stonework is for me. There are stones in that wall by

my creek that I have no idea how I lifted. They're just way too heavy, and I never had any help. I was always by myself. So, I was out of my personal limitations.

CG: Musicians and artists sometimes call that the zone.

CB: Athletes know about it too. We all just adore it because something is flowing through us. Another Rumi metaphor for how that feels is when he says a human being is like the reed flute. It has nine holes and has been plucked from the reed bed mud of God. Now we're able, through our hollowiness, to be able to make a noise, which is language. All that language

can say, underneath all the intricacies of the tunes and melodies we play, under every language and everything all human beings say, is nostalgia. We want to go back to the reed bed where we were making mud and making sugar from the cane.

The reed flute theory of language implies that if the human is the flute there must be a flute player, so you have to be played. In other words, breath has to flow through you from some other source. The human being can't make the tune itself. The only real tune that can be played is the whining, which is the core of longing in every human being. That longing is the essence of humanity.

CG: Ed, you work with music a lot. How do you see it all connecting?

Ed Henderson: Well, it's really interesting. The state you get to, where artists want to get, where you actually feel like something is playing your instrument – I'm not thinking about my hands or anything, I'm just there in the moment and playing – is a state that most musicians I know really long for. That's what we want. We're always trying to find that.

With some people you play with, you just always go there. There's something about that. I don't know if it's the muse or the Great Spirit, but something possesses you and everybody you're working with, and you just go. In a sense, you're the vessel for that moment.

CG: How have birds been an inspiration for you?

EH: Coleman, you said a wonderful thing at the beginning of *Birdsong*, a delicious thing: "Walking an Irish hillside once, I was stunned, as everyone is, by the performance of a skylark. Falling – warbling, a chunked gob of pure kamikaze water music, unbelievably fluid and beyond any melody."

Some of the music I wrote, one of the pieces actually had this freefalling thing, this choir all around it. That's part of what inspired me. But it's interesting, the references to bird and birdsong in here and in Rumi's poetry.

CB: Well, in his book *Birdsong*, Rumi talks about these branching moments, the baby bird that's at that crucial moment where it's about to step off and fly or fall. So it's important to him, being fledged and feathered enough to fly. That's an important metaphor.

He's got a lot of birds [in his writing,] the wonderful story of the hawk that somehow gets in an old woman's kitchen. The noble falcon in the old

woman's kitchen, and she says, "Who's been taking care of you? Somebody's let your toenails grow long." He says this is a horrible situation for the raptor to be in. The soul wants to be on the king's wrist and hunting.

His image of what that looks like is this noble raptor sitting on the shelf in an old woman's kitchen with the smoke coming up from the cooking and he's crying.

CG: When we get ill we need to listen, but a lot of times we're so distracted we'll take a pill rather than listen. Does Rumi talk about listening to what's being said?

CB: Oh, yes. The whole practice the Sufis have evolved with Rumi, maybe the most experimental, is called Samal. And it's a deep listening of poetry and music, with movement involved sometimes, so that you're seeing something as you're listening. That practice was meant to take us to a shared inwardness. My teacher recognized it in the jewel lights of everybody's eyes. He called his students the jewel lights of his eyes, so the exchange of that shared inwardness was apparent in the shining of the eyes.

Rumi talks about the birds in the flocks, how they do it in one mind. There's not a leader that says when to turn, as there may be in the V's of the geese. Of these birds that flock, he says: "Everything is flying and each particle is circulating on its own." And then he says, "Is the one I love everywhere?" I love what he does at the end of poems sometimes. He just brings a question in that just sort of encapsulates what has come before.

CG: I have to ask your sense around the invasion of Iraq.

CB: I think it's a huge mistake and we have to get out of there as soon as we can. The people in Afghanistan, though, really appreciated our taking down the Taliban. They give the thumbs up sign to the soldiers when they see them, because it was so ugly what they were doing. I mean, that country adores music and they wouldn't let them listen to music or cheer at soccer games.

The place I stayed, the American Institute for Afghan Studies, was an old Taliban Ministry of Virtue and Vice. They had a swimming pool there and keep it about four or five feet deep in the winter. For little infractions, they would make people stand in the pool for 72 hours, and then they'd start to question them,

continued on p. 45

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When peace brokers block justice

FILMS WORTH WATCHING • ROBERT ALSTEAD

April 10 marks the eighth anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in Belfast. Four months after this watershed in the Northern Ireland peace process, a fringe splinter group, calling themselves the Real IRA, set off a car bomb in the crowded high street in Omagh. The bomb killed 29 people, including a pregnant woman with unborn twins, and injured 220 others. It was the worst single act of terrorism in Northern Ireland's bloody history, killing men, women, children, Catholics, Protestants and Northern and Southern Irish.

Like so much that has transpired in embattled Ireland, the motivation for such an atrocity remains murky. Although a tense opening passage depicts the building and the detonation of the bomb, *Omagh* focuses more on the aftermath and the impact on the victims' families and their fight to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The film, directed by Pete Travis with a script by Paul Greengrass – Greengrass made the similarly politically charged *Bloody Sunday* – follows soft-spoken Michael Gallagher (a tremendous performance by Gerard McSorley), a small-businessman, who, having lost his only son in the bombing, finds himself leading a support group for the victims' families.

It had become clear to Gallagher that the police and authorities were dragging their feet in the investigation, ironically, to protect the peace process. Gallagher responds by thrusting himself, with even more energy, into the campaign, even as the strain on his own family begins to tell. Gallagher, an ordinary man caught in a shadowy web of subterfuge and false promises, is led to a night-time rendezvous with an undercover, terrorist spy, and becomes the recipient of secret tip-offs and constant media calls.

In a memorable scene where Gallagher meets the opaque Irish Republican leader Gerry Adams (played credibly by Jonathan Ryan), Gallagher reaches out for help to bring the killers to justice, only to come up against soothing words and the hard line that nothing must jeopardize the peace process.

Omagh would not be half as effective at tackling the subject of balancing justice with peace, if it weren't for the powerful performances by the leads, particularly McSorley as Gallagher. The support group's campaign



In *Omagh*, Gerard McSorley gives a potent performance as Michael Gallagher, a father and family man seeking justice for his 21-year-old son, who was killed in the Omagh bombing.

was eventually vindicated with the publication of a police ombudsman's report, which condemned both the police and British Intelligence for widespread errors, both before and after the bombing, including failing to act on information that might have prevented the carnage.

Originally released for television in the UK in 2004, the film concludes with a landmark victory. The campaign,

however, continues. Most recently, Gallagher has unsuccessfully (at time of writing) urged a Toronto-based web hosting company "to shut down a Real IRA hate-site." The Omagh Support and Self Help

Group provides more information at www.omaghbomb.co.uk

VIFF audience award winner returns to VIFF

The new Vancouver International Film Centre has gained its stride with a varied selection of films from around the world. This month sees the return of festival favourite *Kamchatka* (until April 9), a bittersweet drama set against the military *coup d'état* in 1976, when thousands of Argentineans disappeared. The story is told through the eyes of a 10-year-old boy, as his activist parents hide out in the country with their two young sons. The regime's political violence is implied and off-screen, contrasting with the warm intimacy of the family, as the parents try, in vain, to conceal

the gravity of the situation and carry on as normal. Considering how low-key the film is, it was a surprising audience award winner at VIFF 2003. The touching, sad tone will leave you with the warm fuzzies.

Film festival focuses on music

Pacific Cinematheque hosts a six-day festival (April 20 to 25), featuring 16 movies and documentaries devoted

to music. *Big Smash* – the festival takes its name from the album by Wreckless Eric, also a fest guest – opens with Peter Watkins' intriguing, sixties mockumentary *Privilege*, about a futuristic, state-controlled rock

star (Paul Jones of *Manfred Mann*), who rebels against his totalitarian oppressors. The fest has something of a retrospective theme, with films featuring Nina Simone, the history of the Jamaican sound system, biopics about *The Clash*'s Joe Strummer, Ronnie Lane of *The Small Faces* and lounge king Juan Garcia Esquivel. It's also a chance to see *The Devil and Daniel Johnstone*, a Sundance Film Festival award winner, which depicts the brilliant, but manic-depressive, musician of the title. Further information is available at www.bigsmash.com

Robert Alstead writes for www.iofilm.ca He is currently making a documentary about cycling called *You Never Bike Alone* (www.youneverbikealone.com).

V for Vendetta

V for Vendetta is a fun and intriguing film, as well as a bold and reflective social commentary. With lots of action and an intricate storyline, the film is based on a series of comics originally published in the '80s.

The setting is in dark and gloomy London after a third world war, where the prime minister has gained dictatorial power, and where citizens live an overly controlled existence of curfews and rules.

An elegant masked man, "V" is the main character. He's a charismatic crusader of anarchy, who has an explosive plan to end fascism in England.

One standout theme in this movie is "people should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people." JFK, Lincoln, Tommy Douglas and Gandhi would understand this film's contemporary message, but the corporate state doesn't want you to see this movie, so their film industry mouthpieces are panning it.

V for Vendetta is nothing like its trailers' glib impressions; it is a brooding, deep movie, which is worth two hours of suspended disbelief. *Vendetta* is a must-see movie.

– Jessica Preston



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APR 2 Walk for Democracy: Let's send a message to Emerson & Harper: Gather 12:30pm at Kingcrest Park (Knight & 26th). Walk starts 1pm along Kingsway, past David Emerson's office on to the Rally at 2pm at Norquay Park, just east of Slocan on Kingsway. More info at www.walkfordemocracy.ca Email info@walkfordemocracy.ca

APR 5 The Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra presents Persian-influenced Intercultural Music with composer Farshid Samandari. FREE, 7pm, Central Library, 350 W. Georgia, Peter Kaye room (lower level). www.vi-co.org

APR 6 Barbara Vining - Universal Law of Healing Christian Science healer shares prayer and healing insights. Free. 7:30pm, Plaza 500 Hotel, 500 West 12th Ave, Vancouver, 604-733-4310.

APR 7-8 C-ING the future with Margaret Wheatley: Discovery & possibilities about relationships and community. Co-presented with the Haven Institute faculty. Downtown Vancouver. Fri. keynote, \$49. Sat. sessions, \$99. Symposium package, \$129. Call 877-247-9238 (ext 234) or www.haven.ca

APR 7-9 Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro, \$10, Course \$295, Pacific Institute of Reflexology, 604-875-8818.

APR 7, 14, 21 Open to Inner Peace: Evening meditations with

light. Help create harmony and peace in your life and that of others. 7 - 8:30pm. Phone: 604-254-1711.

APR 8 Shamanic Drumming & Dreaming Circle: Saturday, 7pm. Experience shamanic dreaming journeywork for insight and healing. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre, 1254, W. 7th. By donation. Turtle Island Healing Circles. 604-418-9636. www.drumcircles.ca

APR 8-9 Free Therapeutic Touch Sessions at Saje Natural Wellness. Experience the perfect blend of the art of Therapeutic Touch with healing 100% natural aromatherapy. Calm your mind, relax your senses, refresh your energy with Nadia. 2252 West 4th Ave. By appointment. 604-738-7253

APR 9 CDM Psychic Institute welcomes author Mary Ellen Flora (Healing: Key to Spiritual Balance) & her inspiring presentation: Heal Yourself, Heal the World. Learn healing meditation techniques. \$25 donation. Meditation: 12:30pm; Lecture: 2pm. Plaza 500 Hotel, 500 West 12th, Vancouver. 604-730-8788.

APR 9 & 10 "Sacred Sound" Seminars with author Dennis Gaumond April 9, 2pm, Spiritualist church, 5584 Kincaid (Burnaby), 604-596-7787. April 10 (Maple Ridge) www.peacefulinsights.com, 604-463-5797. Information: dgomo@golden.net, www.whylislife.com

APR 14 & 15 Relationships Myths, Mirrors and Magic, a two day program with Dr. John F. Demartini. Discover the secret to a fulfilling relationship, and learn to appreciate love, and loved ones. Apr 14 7-10pm, Apr 15 10-6pm., Centennial Theatre, North Van. \$500 Couples, \$300 Singles. Tickets at Box Office (604) 984-4484

APR 14, 15, 16 Satsang with Neelam Meditation and Dialogue ending all seeking and struggle. A tender and definite inquiry into the Truth of who we are. Friday 7:30pm (Suggested \$20). Saturday & Sunday 11am-4pm (\$50 - \$100). HR MacMillan Space Centre, Vancouver. NO SCENTS PLEASE. 604-254-9150 www.neelam.org

APR 15, 18, 19-24 "Overtones Singing" with author Dennis Gaumond April 15, 2pm, Phoenix Books, 10202-152 St. (Surrey), 604-584-8738. April 18 "Numerology" (Chilliwick) 604-796-3677. April 19-24 Okanagan, 877-779-7223. www.whylislife.com

APR 18 Rosicrucian Learning Centre of Vancouver presents "Art, Creativity, and Spirituality," 7:30pm, 809 West 23rd Avenue. Two Artists display and discuss the unfolding creative process. By donation.

APR 18-23 Eve Ensler, author of The Vagina Monologues performs her new play The Good Body at the Centre for the Performing Arts in Vancouver. Tickets through Ticketmaster, 604-280-4444.

APR 20-MAY 3 Prayer for the World Exhibition: Works by Lori-ann Latremouille, Linda Lando Fine Art, 2001 West 41st Avenue, 604-266-6010. www.latremouille.com / www.linda-landofineart.com Artist reception Apr 20, 6-9pm.

APR 20 CHFA Expo West Keynote Presentation: Prof. Luc Montagnier presents "Oxidative Stress and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases" - 7-9pm, Vancouver

APR 21 Chris Kilham Medicine Hunter presents the keynote seminar at the Canadian Health Food Association Show, 7 PM, Parkview Terrace, Rooms 1 through 3, Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, 999 Canada Place. Free admission. \$5 donations to the Amazon Rainforest Reserve appreciated.

APR 21-23 Kriya Yoga Lecture: With Gonesh Baba, disciple of Paramahansa Hariharananda who is direct disciple of Sriyuktswarji and Yoganandaji. Friday, April 21, 7pm. Quaker Hall, 1090 W 70 Ave (at Oak). Program info: 604-253-4612.

APR 22 Earthsave Canada Presents an Earth Day Almost All-You-Can-Eat Dessert Buffet & Film Night, 7pm, Film TBA, \$12/member (\$15/non-member). Email ineout@earthsave.bc.ca to register or call 604-731-5885.

APR 22 Beyond The Polarities - Samadhi Class: 10-

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APR 27-30 Mental Health Regained, an evening with Margot Kidder at the 35th Annual International Orthomolecular Medicine Conference. Margot Kidder presents a special public evening, Fri, Apr 28, 7:30pm. Also featuring Theresa Reist & Linda Santini. Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W. Georgia St., \$20. Register online at www.orthomed.org or call 416-733-2117.

APR 27, 28, 30 Seminars with author Dennis Gaumond, April 27, 7pm "Divine Energy" and April 30, 1pm, "Sacred Sound," at Awakenings giftstore, 15175 Russell (White Rock), www.EmergingPathway.ca, 604-535-6603. April 28 "Numerology" (Vancouver) www.asacredspace.ca, 604-608-6774. www.whylislife.com

APR 28 Premier Birdsong, presented by the Vancouver Chamber Choir and the Iranian Canadian Cultural Association. Edward Henderson's newly extended setting of Rumi poems with a combination of chorus and tar. New translations by Coleman Barks. Chan Centre, Ticketmaster, 604-822-2697.

APR 28-30 Introduction to Ear Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro, \$10, Course \$295, Pacific

Institute of Reflexology, 604-875-8818.

MAY 4-7 Vancouver Marathon (May 7) and The Healthy Nutrition & Wellness Expo (May 4-6), Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre, 999 Canada Place. Free seminars & demos. For info about Expo and to register for the marathon online, visit www.bmvancouver.ca

MAY 5-7 Faith in the Rockies with Neale Donald Walsch. An interactive conversation, God and Me: a Journey to Holy Ground. Radisson Hotel, Canmore. Information: www.faithintherockies.com

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The reaction

In a world where the common response to distasteful political manoeuvres is a shrug – and if any commentary is evoked, a resigned “but what can we do?” – the public reaction to the Harper-Emerson affair, and the subsequent action, truly is the story that must be told.

It is clear that Canadians are not impressed with Prime Minister Harper’s first actions as leader. Numerous public opinion polls covering Canada, BC, and the Vancouver-Kingsway riding itself have shown that Canadians overwhelmingly oppose the Emerson defection specifically. Tellingly, polls conducted even in Conservative strongholds within BC indicate that support for Emerson’s resignation and a by-election is running at 75 percent.

Does anybody in Ottawa stand up for democracy?

Acting on the request of opposition party MPs and strong demand from the Canadian public, parliamentary Ethics Commissioner Bernard Shapiro launched an inquiry into the Harper-Emerson affair, only to return with a predictable verdict: no rules were broken, according to the limited scope of inquiry permitted by the commissioner’s mandate. Close observers of the process always expected Harper and Emerson to get off on a “technicality” – what couldn’t be predicted is how Shapiro would frame the issue:

“Accordingly, although technically there has been no violation to the rules of conduct of the Members’ Code, the incident in question does raise the whole issue of whether the principles upon which it relies have been respected.”

“Fairly or unfairly, this particular instance seems to have given many citizens a “sense” that their vote – the cornerstone of our democratic system – was somehow devalued, if not betrayed.” – Ethics Commissioner Bernard Shapiro

What the Shapiro report really underscores is this: there is no one, no body and no politician in Ottawa who can be relied upon to protect our democracy. There is no alternative; the people must carry this task.

Activism

It had to happen, pent up frustration pushed many individuals to launch their own form of protest. People made signs and started impromptu protests on street corners – and then bumped into others who had the same idea. Slowly but surely like-minded individuals came together, and soon there were

Democracy continued from p. 39

a number of campaigns underway, all seeking Emerson’s resignation as their primary objective.

With very little organization, and even less funds, ordinary individuals and small groups of people are pulling off extra-ordinary achievements.

“De-elect” lawn signs and “Recall Emerson” buttons are not only dotting the Vancouver area, but now can be found in Ottawa, Victoria, Montreal and even in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Public awareness of the issue has been rising steadily, thanks to the efforts of all involved, and this undercurrent of discontent, which knows no riding boundaries, has helped ensure that Canadians across the country are aware of that which we fight for – democracy.

What’s drawing regular folks – many have never before participated in the political process beyond voting, and most have never carried a protest sign in their entire lives – out of their comfortable routine is the justness of the cause.

We all owe Stephen Harper and David Emerson a great deal of thanks, because their undemocratic and unprincipled actions have underscored an uneasy sense that many of us have always felt – that the voice of the people means very little to many of those who represent us.

Sensing public opinion and persistence, editorialists and columnists from across the country have joined Canadians in urging Stephen Harper and David Emerson to do the right thing and help restore faith in our democracy by participating in a by-election.

So far those calls have gone unanswered.

Call to action

Thanks to Harper and Emerson, the issues have never before been made clearer, resulting in an awakening of public consciousness which is unprecedented in modern times. What’s most important is that we all remain awake to how precious and fragile democracy truly is, and that requires we continue to get new people involved, and raise everyone’s level of understanding.

Volunteer, donate, honk your horn, plant a sign, march in a rally, wave a flag – join your fellow neighbours and citizens in standing up for our democracy. Don’t rely on someone else to carry the torch – we all need to take our turn.

For further information visit www.realdemocracy.ca – this non-partisan group provides the single best place to get informed, get involved, and stay plugged into the on-going fight for democracy. For more see info@democracy.ca





Chris Kilham continued from p. 8

compromised due to pollutants in the environment, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, stress, high cortisol levels – you name it. It's just prudent to do things that can boost your immune system. That's definitely the right approach.

That doesn't mean, though, that if you encounter a virulent flu that things are going to work out well. You just don't know. Even with a good immune system, if you get hit hard enough by a lethal flu you can die, no question about it.

JR: How do plants help improve our immune system? Maybe mom was right about eating our vegetables.

CK: Fruits and vegetables enhance immune function overall because they contain a plethora of compounds, many of which are antioxidants that also have immune-enhancing power. Whether you're talking about the purple pigments in purple berries or the reds and yellows that you find in many vegetables and fruits, they have other functions besides being antioxidant.

My favourite herb right now is *Rhodiola rosea* from Siberia. It has a tremendous track record of safety, and probably as much science as any herb. There's also the Chinese herb, *Andrographis*, and cat's claw from the Amazon, all just superb immune enhancing agents. We have those and literally thousands more. I mean, green tea and chocolate enhance immunity.

JR: What are your favourite antioxidants now?

CK: There's no question that some antioxidant compounds are more powerful than others. The purple berries like blueberry, chokeberry and elderberry give you very powerful antioxidant activity. The purple pigments are the most powerful dietary antioxidants we know, but the ones you get in red wine and chocolate, and many fresh fruits and vegetables – red and yellow peppers and squash – and green tea, all perform the function of protecting the body from premature cellular destruction.

They also do other things, so I don't have a favourite like lutein, or something like that, because I don't go for isolation of compounds. If you're smart in terms of body protection, you eat a rich variety of fresh foods that naturally are high in antioxidant compounds.

JR: I was concerned when I was driving along the coast of Costa Rica and saw mile after mile of old palm oil plantations that had totally changed the ecosystem.

CK: Right. We're faced with making choices now where the best we can do is make choices that are less harmful than others. We've got a population of six billion plus,

which is way too many, so we can do things like grow crops organically, and if we're smart many crops can be grown in woodland situations so we can preserve some forest. It's that or logging, cattle grazing and other kinds of development.

The days of leaving pristine environment alone, I'm sad to say, are largely over. So in facing decisions, what choices will be less harmful than others? I think organic agriculture is a less destructive choice than clearcutting, cattle grazing and developing strip malls.

JR: I was thinking about the concept of wilderness. We need the experience of just being in a pristine area.

CK: Yes, exactly. The problem is people go to pristine areas and they say, "Wow, this place is so beautiful and unspoiled. I'll build here." And it doesn't matter whether it's the South Pacific or Patagonia or wherever. People flock to those places and build there and they become less pristine.

Last spring I was in a region of Peru that even 20 years ago was, for the most part, undeveloped. Now, it's mostly developed, and instead of virgin Amazon rainforest, it's citrus plantations and pineapple. It's a mess. Some things I'll share with you. India has just devastating, horrific deforestation. When you see people out collecting firewood and destroying the natural landscape, you realize they're extremely poor; they've got to find a way to keep their families warm and they're going to do just what you'd expect. They're going to cut down some wood because they need to cook, to keep their families warm, to actually survive.

When you look at devastation in the Amazon, a lot of extremely poor, disenfranchised people work on logging crews simply and only because it will, in some meager way, help them feed their families. It's sad and pathetic, but that's the reality of the situation.

I burn so much jet fuel I'd better do something good for people. One of the positive ways all of this can come together is if Native people, who understand plants well, can either cultivate, or in some cases, sustainably wild-harvest medicinal plants. They help preserve the natural environment in which they live; they earn a living and gain some social and economic power while keeping

a robust and healthy medicinal plant harvest going worldwide. People could get valuable medicines instead of the flakey, untested pharmaceutical alternatives.

If there's a group of people who work with a particular herb that's beneficial, how do you shorten the

chain of trade so that they make more money or good money and the environment gets protected and communities get help the way they need it? There are many other people out there working on the same equation, but we need lots and lots of people to just green-up and do this kind of thing.

JR: You need to have the consumers willing to support and invest in it.

CK: Consumers have shown time and again that if you make it easy for them, they'll buy green products. They'll buy organic milk; they'll buy cosmetics made with rainforest

When you look at devastation in the Amazon, a lot of extremely poor, disenfranchised people work on logging crews simply and only because it will, in some meager way, help them feed their families. It's sad and pathetic, but that's the reality of the situation.

Birdsong continued from p. 40

"So you've been listening to the radio again, have you?" Of course, they weren't sane, and the Afghan people are a tremendously sane people and gorgeously cultured.

CG: The Taliban was created by western imperialism after their homes were destroyed. Of course, the empire always thinks it's trying to help people out.

CB: The Americans are giving democracy to this ancient culture, which has been governed by tribal charisma. They've known how to govern for a long time.

EH: How can artists do anything about this? I'd love to know how to get through to the warriors. It's incredibly idealist to think of getting through to the Taliban, except something has to happen.

CB: The Sufis say the great world is the inner world, and the outer world of stores and restaurants and nations and three hundred billion galaxies is the small world. The inner world is your awareness. The outer is a kind of language for our inner. That reversal: you can't shoot a weapon into a place where four hundred people are if you think the great world is the inner world and each of those people is housing a treasure of consciousness. That's a way out of it, I think. I have children and they wouldn't ever pull a gun on somebody for some foreign policy reason that changes every two

ingredients. I think we can create a robust, sustainable market for plant medicine with fair trade and environmental protections and make it easy for people to participate and vote with their dollars.

JR: Do you have something you use?

CK: I take a lot of herbs. I take *Rhodiola rosea*. I take maca from Peru. I take a lot of ginseng. I drink green tea. I eat lots of fresh ginger, garlic and hot chilies, all of which are powerfully medicinal. I eat acai in various forms on a regular basis. I consume a lot of antioxidant-rich fresh fruits and vegetables.

I think people can help to fuel the sustainable herbal movement the same way that consumers helped to fuel the organic food movement: by walking into stores and asking for fair trade organic herbs, and asking over and over and over again and voting with their dollars for those brands that they find are high quality.

That's really how you get a movement up and running. Unfortunately, it won't happen just because it's the right thing to do, but it will happen if consumers drive the trend. In Vancouver, I'll be focusing on the Amazon because it's a real fascination for people and it's a place that I love to do work.

weeks. Come on. The people I meet would not go to war for any reason.

CG: Coleman, if you were complete with Rumi, what would you be doing now?

CB: I write my own poems, so I divide my time about half and half between these ancient texts and my own poems. I'd probably be doing some of that. But I've also found this 16th century Sufi named Sarmad that I'm interested in. He lived in India and was killed because he'd only say the first half of the Zikhr, "la-h'ila..." there is no God. The rest of it is there is no reality but God. But he just kept saying what he knew: "There is no God, there is no God." He was just doing the negative, that you've got to become rubble first. So he was just emphasizing the absence.

EH: There's a beautiful poem: "The way of love is not a subtle argument. The door there is devastation." I just love, "Birds make great sky circles of their freedom. How do they learn it? They fall, and falling they're given wings."

CB: That's the surrender, isn't it?

EH: Yes, that state of giving up where you suddenly start to fly. I'm really excited to be singing some of your poems, and to be singing some of them in Farsi. We've been working on getting the original Farsi. It's a tremendously gifted choir of singers, amazing musicians. It's beautiful.

Faith in the Rockies

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to Holy Ground

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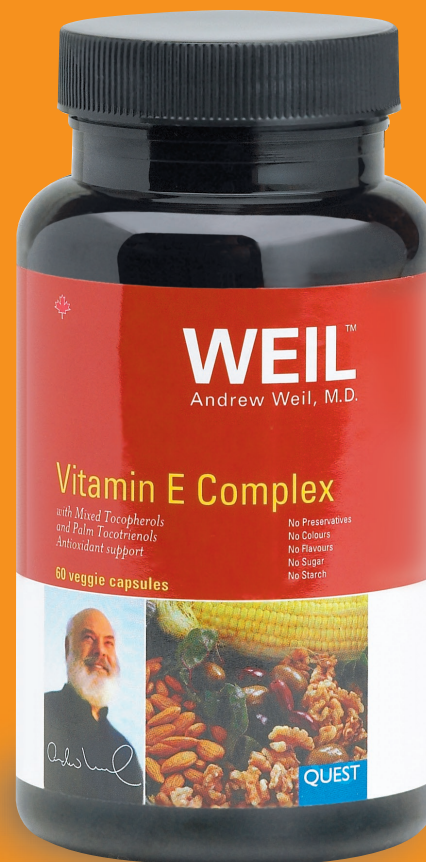
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